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A Woman of War

AND

OTHER STORIES

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PREFACE.

The popular features of a great war are its incidents.

Plans of battle, details of movements and statistics of killed and wounded, attract the few; stories of valor and of daring reach the universal heart.

No war of the world's history surpasses the wonderful interest of our civil conflict. The bravery and devotion on both sides of the line; the marvelous development of military skill; the tremendous energy of the people in utilizing every possible resource, and the high courage and manhood that incited and actuated officer and private, made the war pre-eminent in heroism as it was decisive in uniting and perpetuating the Union.

These stories do not attempt to deal with the greater aspects of this war. They are mere sketches built upon true incidents. Most of the characters are real.

At the suggestion of personal friends the stories have been put in permanent form. No special merit is claimed for them, but the author indulges in the hope that they will, at least, be found interesting.

NACIREMA, *September 1, 1894.*

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NOEL OF 1864.

On the cold and crispy Christmas of 1864 the army of the Shenandoah was resting peacefully in its winter quarters around Winchester and Stevenson's Station.

Snow had fallen for many days.

The whole valley was a field of whiteness. Roads were badly blocked and the pathways through the Blue Ridge and the surrounding mountains were almost impassable. Down the valley, beyond the picturesque Massanutton group, the Confederates, under Early, had retired to secure quarters at Staunton.

It looked like a season of quiet camp life and peace.

Yet the celerity and watchfulness which Early had displayed at Cedar Creek, had taught Sheridan that unvarying vigilance must be his only protection against surprise and danger.

Consequently, cavalry was used liberally in small detachments to scour the country from mountain to

mountain. It was lively work, and it was hard work; but the reports brought in by the reconnoitering parties added to our satisfaction of mind, and promised us a Christmas full of peace and plenty. The indications were all against a winter campaign.

Our established quarters were so well known to our friends, and were so fortunate in having railroad connection with the North, that when the Christmastide drew near, loads of boxes, full of dainties from home, came as blessings to nearly all. Any comrade who failed to receive one of these substantial messages, was made to share in the general profusion of good things. Fellowship is the religion of army life, and on such an occasion there was no stint in the men's generosity.

So, all in all, we were in for a merry Christmas.

But there was Mosby! As you know, he and his cavalry were the big bugaboo of the Union forces in the Valley. He had not strength enough to do us serious injury, but he had the style of men that kept a constant warfare on our wagon trains, and it looked at one time as if his position on the war issues had completely changed.

Instead of secession, Mosby had all at once become a Russian general, and wanted nothing but Turkey.

Now Mosby as a man, was no means a favorite with us; as a guerrilla, he had our distinct disapproval ; but when he appeared all at once in the light of a turkey gobbler, it naturally led us to look on him as hardly human—since the turkeys were ours.

Oh, how we did bless him on that occasion ! Why couldn't he let us alone and leave us to the enjoyment of those good things from home? That was the question we asked between regrets, for he kept another brigade tramping through the snow. And those who spent that cold Christmas in the saddle will never forget their experience, nor forgive Mosby for his disregard of their comfort.

Mosby's style of fighting was that of the Indian. He seldom attacked in large numbers : he merely pestered our ranks, and when we pushed him closely, his men would scatter to the four winds, in numbers of three to ten, and make successful pursuit almost an impossibility; for in order to follow and punish these small detachments, the Union troops were obliged to use the same policy and send squads, under both commissioned and non-commissioned officers, to cover the country for miles and miles.

Everything had been very quiet in our front, and Sheridan was satisfied that Early would not bother

him. Nevertheless, Mosby's great activity kept suspicion alive, and on Christmas Eve our general determined to renew his vigilance.

He ordered another brigade on scouting duty with directions to pay special attention to the mountain gaps, and the compliments of the season to any chance part of the enemy that came within speaking distance of our guns.

Rations for three days and forty rounds of ammunition to each man, was the Christmas morning order. The boxes from home were despoiled of their bounty. Turkey, chicken, pheasant (cooked and uncooked), dainties prepared by loving hands, and substantials without limit, were the happy lot of the warrior bold; and in less than half an hour the knapsacks were packed, not with old salt army beef, but with appetizing luxuries sent from good kitchens and loving friends.

And while we knew not where we would eat our noon-day meal, we blessed with all our souls the name of Him who came to save the world.

After deciding upon a good reserve, the brigade was sub-divided into regiments, and those into squadrons and platoons, so each detachment, under a reliable officer, felt itself thoroughly independent.

A squad of Troop C, from one of Devan's regiments, under Captain Gallaspie, was ordered to follow the road that led through the gap over the mountains, and from the high cliffs to take a good look over the Luray valley, on the other side, and see if they could discover anything that showed the presence of the enemy. In such a season the camp-fire was the tell-tale indication of a body of soldiers.

A strong party it was, and full of vigor and cheerfulness. Several small towns fell in its way, and then every house and hamlet was searched for able-bodied men, who when found, were arrested. Non-combatants, however, were treated with unvarying kindness.

Perhaps no valley in the world contains more natural beauty than this superb stretch of country. The magnificent outlook over the level fields, and the grandeur of the rugged scenes around the bordering mountains, filled one with admiration, in spite of cold winds and the universal snow.

Some fifteen miles away, the indentation of the mountain indicated to the troopers the road to the gap. Giving the horses rein, they were soon plough-ing through the heavy drifts of snow, which at times were so deep that they threatened to engulf rider as

well as horse. It was hard work and slow progress, and cold chills played hide-and-seek in the most exasperating way up and down their backbones. This, too, was merely a preliminary struggle.

Dashes into places where Mosby's men were expected to be found, were well done; but whenever a nest was reached, the bird was not there—he had flown to some other hiding ground.

The command did not tarry long, as the day was short, and the main object being to cross the gap and take a peep into the Luray valley.

It was not very long before Gallespie and his troopers found themselves at the foot of the hill. He made a careful survey before venturiug into the gap, and seeing no footpath on the snow, he felt it safe to advance without reconnoitering. In a short time he saw that the drifts were too dangerous and the snow was too solidly frozen, to permit the progress of the horses.

A new plan was adopted. One-half of the command was to cross on foot, and the other half remain with the horses.

It was a tough climb. The wind was piercing, the snow was deep, and each step was harder than the other.

But perseverance had its reward. In less than an hour the men were looking over the valley on the other side. Like the country they had just left, it was buried beneath a heavy fall of snow, and as far as the eye could reach, the desolation seemed unbroken.

Beautiful it was, but as somber-looking as the winding sheet of a corpse.

For full fifteen minutes Gallespie stood scanning the horizon, but could see nothing that indicated the presence of troops. He and his men were just about to turn back and return to their horses, when one of the command called out:

"What's that?"

They looked as he pointed, and, sure enough, they saw what appeared to be the gable end of a barn, a little to the left and under the cliff of the road.

They moved further to the right, to get a better view. Then within a stone's throw, standing in a level field below the road, which had been built up from the land, they saw an old Virginia barn, which, in spite of its age and the snow that tried to cover it, showed signs of having been well built. Not far from it the irregularity of the drifts indicated the ruins of an old homestead.

It looked as if the barn was deserted. Certainly its surroundings were as cheerless and as lifeless as any imagination could picture.

Captain Gallespie decided to investigate. In addition to satisfying his curiosity, he might find forage for the horses. He and his men ventured slowly down the road and through the field. No footsteps could be seen; not a sign of life was visible, not a sound broke the dreariness of the place.

But soldiers are naturally suspicious. The bravest are the most cautious. Their experience makes them so.

Gallespie was no exception to this rule. He was always willing to risk his life if there was need or recompense for the courage, but he was not the officer to lead his men into a trap.

As they approached, suddenly they saw a sign of warning—a silent witness of human presence in this wilderness of snow. It was a bit of smoke curling from a side opening of the barn.

Gallespie anticipated danger, and lost no time in preparing for it. Word was sent back for all men who could be spared from the horses to come up afoot. The path made by the first party enabled them to arrive in a short time.

Then Gallespie led his men toward the barn. They felt that trouble was ahead, and each man was alert and ready. Scarcely a dozen steps had they advanced when the barn door slowly opened.

With every face set in grim determination, all the men came to a halt to await developments. Their carbines were ready for any emergency.

They expected a few compliments from Mosby. They certainly did not look for what they saw.

As the door opened, the dangerous and wily enemy they had tracked to this lonely lair, confronted them. With an injured sense of wasted valor, the men stared in silent and disgusted astonishment as their excited visions of Mosby and his desperate band of fighters resolved themselves into one plump figure—and, ye gods ! it wore petticoats !

An arduous, toilsome march, a thrilling discovery, a reinforcement of troops, a skillful advance, a rally of courage, a breathless suspense—and all to surprise one good old harmless colored woman !

She threw up both hands when she saw them as if a ghost had confronted her. The amazement was strictly mutual.

And what a strange incident was to be revealed !

Gallespie advanced to question her, but she had no time to answer him.

"Be you a doctor?" she asked anxiously.

"A doctor?"

"Yes, massa. My missus am in dar, 'en a child am just been borned! Oh! please, massa, ain't you a doctor?"

Her pathetic appeal would have quickened harder hearts than those before her, and it did not take many seconds to summon the surgeon of the command. In a short time he was at the sick lady's bedside.

This unexpected termination of the expedition powerfully affected the men. It seemed almost as if they had been sent by the sweet pity of the Divine Babe of Bethlehem on this snowy Christmas day, to save this little waif, that in the midst of cold and desolation, encircled by armies, yet totally forsaken, exposed from its first feeble breath to the vicissitudes of war, had commenced its weak struggle in the great battle of life. Fearful auspices had presided over its birth—from its very start, on how slight a chance had depended its preservation!

And what tender memories it awakened—what chords it touched in almost every heart! Soft little arms hundreds of miles away, clung almost palpably

around many a neck, and rough bearded lips were pressed in imagination on baby mouths untouched by caresses since the stern necessity of war bade men and soldiers forget that they were also husbands and fathers. Mosby and all his men could never have produced on gallant Troop C one half of the weakening effect of the unconscious and helpless baby they had so unknowingly marched straight to rescue on that eventful Christmas morning.

Of course there was a romance connected with the episode, and, of course, the men soon knew it, a romance whose pathetic tragedy was consecrated and brightened by the light of a true woman's love.

The lady was the noble wife of the colonel of a Louisiana regiment. He had been engaged in the savage fight at Cedar Creek, on the 18th of October, and in the midst of the battle, while supporting Kershaw's division he received a dangerous wound.

News of the sad occurrence reached the devoted wife in her Southern home, two thousand miles away, and, although she was unfit to travel, she heroically traversed the distance, in order to aid and comfort the man whom she had sworn to love, and whom she did

love with all the fervency of her soul, proving the devotion she had pledged to him at the conscious risk of her life.

Some of his comrades had carried him away from the field of battle, in hopes that he might be able to reach his sunny South; but the wounds were more serious than they first supposed, and the continued loss of blood had told heavily upon him. The effort to get him over the mountains through this gap was unsuccessful. He was growing steadily weaker, and as they passed the barn, it was decided to allow him to rest there for a few hours.

But he never became strong enough to be removed. Life seemed to hang by a mere thread, and every day promised to be his last.

His wife and sister with the faithful old servant had arrived in time to care for him in his last hours, and they did it with that beautiful tenderness which makes women the ministering angels of the world; but he was past their ministrations.

A week before the arrival of Gallespie's party, the Colonel died, blessing the love that had dared death to make it easier to him. The two Confederates who had remained with him, dug the grave wherein his remains were sorrowfully laid to rest.

After the burial, the excitement of the war compelled the two soldiers to join the command. The ladies and the old servant were left alone.

Then, at the time of their bitterest sorrow and direst need, the snow came down, and cut them off from all communication with the world.

To leave the ladies in that desolate place was out of the question; so we soon had a stretcher for the sick mother, and accommodation for the sister and servant. Our little caravan moved slowly, and every man in the command vied with every other man in his attentions to our precious burdens. When we reached Winchester, the little family was placed in the hands of some good people named Goldsborough, who gave them the best of care.

We did not see them again, but we knew that in all the fury of war and the storm of sectional hate, that one woman's grateful heart in the sunny South daily blessed the name of the North and set it always in her most fervent prayers for the sake of her baby's saviors and her own.

I saw Mr. Goldsborough a few years ago. He told me that his family was still on intimate terms with the

Louisiana ladies, and that the boy born in the barn, as the Christ-Child had been one thousand eight hundred and sixty-four years before, was a fine, healthy youth, and that, being French, the family had called him Noel Luray Perseval.

A WOMAN OF WAR.

CHAPTER I.

A SUDDEN ATTACK.

In the month of May, 1863, General Banks determined to invest Port Hudson.

Our brigade, then in garrison at Baton Rouge, was ordered to proceed northward by the main road, and open line of march, advancing in such a direction as to make, that same afternoon, a junction with the main body of the army, consisting of some twenty-two thousand men, who were mostly on transports coming up the Mississippi. The west side of the river was already guarded by a strong force, with orders to flank any batteries that might attempt to line the river banks. The brave Farragut and his victorious fleet, fresh from the conquests of the lower Mississippi forts, had proceeded up the river some ten days before.

The day we began our march was terribly hot.

The sun shone scorchingly from a clear sky; there was scarcely any breeze, and the dust which covered the roadway to an unusual thickness, added greatly to our hardships. By twelve o'clock the mercury registered one hundred one and a half degrees; at three o'clock it rose to one hundred and three, an atmosphere in which the cool determination necessary to our success was rather difficult to maintain, although our feelings were certainly warm enough to satisfy the most exacting of commanders. As rapidly as they could under these circumstances, our men proceeded.

Many fell victims to sunstroke, and the ambulances were filled with these unfortunates. It was literally hot warfare in those days.

Few incidents marked the first part of the march. The atmosphere was too enervating, and the men were too tired for merry-making.

But about two o'clock we reached a prettily-wooded country, and the refreshment of the cool shade produced a visible improvement in the men. A halt was made to give the brigade time to prepare the luxurious noon-day meal, which meant coffee, fried bacon and hard-tack. The country around us was rich in tropical vegetation, which had become slightly parched by the heat and drought; but the large fields

and occasional habitations, with their long, hospitable-looking verandas and low thatched roofs, proclaimed a region of former, if not of present prosperity.

Our crude meal over, the lines were reformed.

Our ranks had commenced to defile out of the woods into the open country, when, to our utter amazement, we found ourselves confronted by a large force of Confederate cavalry.

Immediately the men of the One Hundred and Sixty-second New York, who were in the lead, were deployed as skirmishers. Our own regiment—the One Hundred and Sixty-fifth New York Duryee Zouaves—was formed in line of battle. The Sixth Michigan and and a Connecticut regiment, whose number I do not recall, were still straggling out of the woods.

We apprehended little danger, for we were under the impression that we had green troops to meet. In fact, we were glad that it was cavalry that we had to fight; for we felt sure of capturing both men and horses. We relied entirely on their inexperience.

But just there we made a great miscalculation. Our skirmishers advanced confidently and intrepidly; but all of a sudden the Confederate cavalry made a brave, vigorous, undaunted charge, and the boys of the One Hundred and Sixty-second New York fell helter

skelter, pell-mell, on our right, driven back by the enemy. The Confederates followed up the panic with great fearlessness. Fortunately a volley from our guns checked their advance, and for the time drove them back to the woods.

Evidently hard work was before us. Our sudden opponents might have been green, but they were plainly anxious to learn, and ready to practice on any stray material that came to hand. We had obligingly, if involuntarily, offered ourselves to satisfy their yearnings in this direction.

There seemed to be a constant increase in the number of our enemy who were strongly lodged in the woods. Reinforcements came to them from all sides.

Had Gardner, the Confederate commander, come out of Port Hudson with his entire force to annihilate our small brigade?

The question prompted itself repeatedly while the originally slim number, by the large acquisitions, developed into four full regiments of cavalry. Then we looked for the infantry.

If it had come, we would have surely been lost. The heat had prostrated many of our men; it had exhausted others, and weakened all. In nowise were

we in a fit condition to cope with an enemy so strong and so numerous.

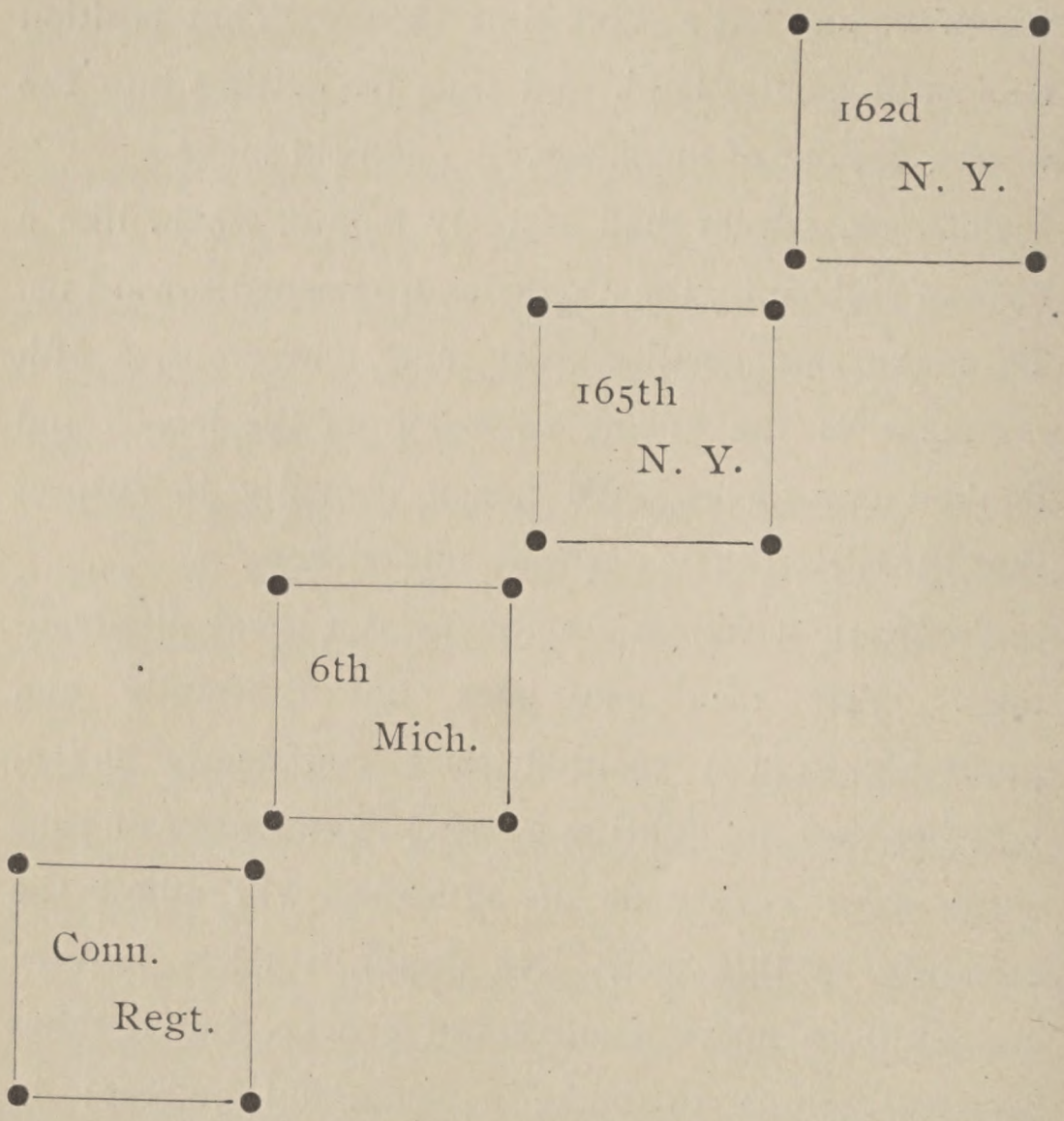
The commanding officers held a hurried consultation. It was determined to fall back to the woods which we had left a short time before. That position we could easily hold, and thus by getting into the woods, get out of them, too, by one bold move.

But our retreat had scarcely begun, when, like a flash of lightning, the Confederates dashed toward us. To make our position still more dangerous, a fifth regiment of the enemy rushed from the woods and flanked our forces. We began dismally to suspect that literally, the woods were full of them.

Troops on a retreat are always at a great disadvantage. Few men can back out gracefully and profitably from a position once confidently taken, whether they are fighting a battle of swords or of pens —the most consistent of agnostics will admit the certainty of this fact. No doubt, it takes bravery and skill to make a successful charge, but it takes positive genius to make a successful retreat; in attempting it, troops fall easier prey to the enemy than in any other movement.

Knowing this fact, nothing was left us but to stand our ground and face the inevitable shock.

Instantly the thrilling notes of the brigade trumpeter ordered the officers to form squares by regiments *en echelon*, and in the next instant, our forces had assumed this position:



A study of this formation will show its peculiar efficacy. It so arranges the men that each regiment can protect the other's flank. All the flanks are protected, except the outer angles of the two end

regiments. The dramatic impressiveness of such a movement admits of no adequate description. The men, nervous with the approaching excitement, seem inwardly to feel the necessity of clinging closely to their fellow-comrades, and as the formation is made in double-quick time, the ranks move with the accuracy of clock-work, and assume their places in the line of battle as evenly as if the commanders had personally placed them there.

Nimes' famous Boston Light Battery of six guns was sub-divided into sections of two guns, and a section was assigned to each one of the first three regiments. The guns were placed at the angles of the squares. The fourth square, containing the last regiment, was packed solid with our ambulances, upon which reposed the soldiers prostrated by the heat.

In a few moments, the onslaught comes.

As the solid mass of cavalry sweeps down upon us, we begin to realize the strength of the men we have to fight. Texan Rangers, Louisiana Troopers, a regiment of Alabama Dragoons, whose motto was "To Glory or to Death," advance intrepidly, naked sabres in their hands and strong huzzahs of encouragement in their throats They dash valiantly ahead. Volley

after volley belches forth from our guns, but their lines do not waver. Empty saddles are turned aside, and able-bodied men fill the vacancies as fast as our guns can make them.

At first, our peculiar formation repulses their terrific advance, and our brisk, heavy firing begins to tell upon their ranks; but in the face of death, their bravery is undaunted, their resolution unfaltering.

What can they mean? They withdraw as suddenly as they came. They abandon the general attack of our ranks.

But now we see! They have changed their purpose. They concentrate their whole force upon the unprotected outer angle of the One Hundred and Sixty-second New York. Massing their columns, and doubling in close array, they begin the second attack. The gleaming sabres are their weapons.

On swiftly, boldly, headlong, they come.

They approach the flank, and the carnage begins. The steady fire of the musketry fails to daunt their determination. Straight-way we see that our first regiment is doomed. Such valor must succeed, or they will perish gloriously in the attempt.

Their attack is well conceived; they strike the outer edge of the unprotected angle; it becomes a

man-to-man fight : the other regiments dare not break their square formations, for the Confederates move with such celerity that it would endanger the whole line. The troopers, wild with excitement, scatter destruction on every side.

Men fall by hundreds.

More intense the warfare rages, and—great heavens! the angle has given way. The square breaks; the panic-stricken regiment rushes on the One Hundred and Sixty-fifth; the horsemen dash upon our retreating men, and many a poor fellow falls upon the ground in the agony of death.

The Confederates see another chance of breaking our second square, by rushing in with the stragglers. But their plans are not so successful as before. Three or four companies of the broken regiment reach the square, and are quickly placed in position to strengthen the endangered angle. The troopers come quickly, but hundreds of muskets scatter death amid their ranks, and empty saddles tell clearly that they have paid dearly for their temporary victory.

Still they do not give in. Their last regiment held in reserve, comes thundering towards the angle.

But many of the horses stop and refuse to advance. The reason is found in the brilliant red, white and

blue Zouave uniforms, which shine brightly in the sunlight. The troopers try in vain to make the animals go forward; they stubbornly refuse. Then it is that a part of the command dismount, and, carbine in hand, bravely dash towards our lines, fighting, although at a disadvantage, with the same undaunted firmness as before.

In the midst of this close-quarter conflict, General Greason, who had left Baton Rouge three hours later than ourselves, comes in sight with two regiments of his cavalry, one from Michigan and one from Illinois. Wellington at Waterloo never looked more anxiously for Blucher and his 30,000 men, than did we for Greason and his cavalrymen. His appearance puts an end to the fighting. The Confederates retreat with all possible haste. Our cavalry, followed by two regiments of infantry, are sent in close pursuit, with instructions to drive the enemy into Port Hudson and keep them there.

To our own regiment and what is left of the One Hundred and Sixty-second, is entrusted the burying of the dead. Over two hundred bodies lay upon the field.

The ordeal of interring the remains of dead soldiers, whether they be friend or foe, is the saddest experi-

ence of military life. The enmities of the battle, the cruelties, the savage desires, are all overshadowed by the sorrow that attends the rude burial. Long trenches are dug, and the bodies, three and four deep, are placed in their last resting-place, with no religious ceremony, but with a silence which tells eloquently of the feelings of our men.

CHAPTER II.

THE TWO CAPTIVES.

We did not get much rest.

The next day we were moving again. Our orders were to proceed to Clinton, a lovely little town some twelve miles east of Port Hudson, to dislodge and scatter any force that we might meet. The weather was more agreeable, and our progress was not hampered by so much difficulty and suffering—mainly, because our path was through one of those great Louisiana forests, which give such welcome shade on a warm summer day.

We had entered the road that led to Clinton. As we were jogging along, our advance guard hastily brought us bad news. They reported danger ahead.

We anxiously looked for it, but our anxiety was misplaced. The large force that we expected, dwindled to two harmless riders who had entered the woods from the opposite direction, and who were coming directly towards us.

One of them was a lady.

She was young, beautiful and self-possessed. A neat riding habit worn with a Stonewall Jackson hat, set off her well-formed figure perfectly. Her companion was a tall, athletic-looking, handsome young man, wearing a Confederate uniform. The rich mountings and trappings of their horses implied aristocratic and distinguished connections.

Our men in the advance were signaled to hide behind the bushes, and the main body was ordered to halt. Into this ambush, the two companions came. As they approached, we could hear their voices, see their glad smiles, and almost enjoy their own happiness.

But what puzzled us most was a lovely white dove, which seemed impatient in its attentions. It would perch on the lady's shoulders and then light upon the young man. Altogether, it was a charming picture. There was no need to guess the thoughts and conversation of the young pair. In the low, earnest tones of the youth, in the ardent glances bent upon the fair face beside him, in the passionate eyes drinking in its beauty, and in the droop of the girl's proud head, the flush on her cheek and the shy, yet happy smile just touching

her lips, was plainly to be read the old, old story. Absorbed in each other, oblivious of their surroundings, they were evidently wandering in Arcady: straight from the fairyland of romance, they were coming to a stern reality of which they did not dream. So they rode blissfully on, unconscious of the snare awaiting them as was the dove, that, hovering about them, courted their caresses.

They came on at an easy pace, carelessly and unsuspectingly. The more closely we saw her, the more we admired her beauty. But it was not that only which attracted us, for from the dark eyes bright with hope and love, lifted one moment, to be veiled the next under sweeping lashes, looked out at every man of us, another pair of eyes mirrored in hers, some gayly laughing, some sweetly grave, but all with that same look of love. Sweethearts are sweethearts the world over—hearts were none the less susceptible for either the blue or gray coats over them, and at this sudden appeal of nature, we were for a moment soldiers no more, but lovers all, and not a man among us looking on that little scene, but sent a tender thought and a longing sigh to where, somewhere in the North, watching and waiting, was the girl he left behind him.

In fact, our warlike hearts were so entirely captured by such a picture of peace and its sweet suggestions, that it was with deep regret orders were given for our men to rush from their hiding places. Instantly, the two riders made a sudden bolt with their horses, only to find themselves completely and hopelessly surrounded.

"You must dismount, sir, and invite your lady to do the same," said the commander to the young Confederate.

"Never, sir. This sword, given to me by Beauregard, shall never be disgraced by a weak surrender to a pack of cowards. Give me a chance, and I'll show you what I mean."

With this he raised the Damascus blade above his head to strike, but suddenly he seemed to realize the position of the lady, and taking the sword at both extremities and striking the blade on the pommel of the saddle, broke it in two. Exclaiming that he had not violated his vow, he threw the shattered pieces aside, leaped from the saddle to the ground, and rushing to the lady's side, assisted her to dismount.

The saddle-bags and trappings were searched for despatches, but none were found. Questions were

asked them, but they answered unsatisfactorily, and the more inquisitive we became, the shorter grew their replies. At last the lady, tired of our importunities, said in a clear and resolute voice:

"Gentlemen, you might save yourselves much trouble by ceasing to ask any more questions. We are your prisoners. We both belong to the Confederate service. Take us, and make the best of your prize; but don't try to get any information from us. We are no cowards."

"I believe you, but you are not the kind of soldiers we are looking for," replied the commander. "I will send this young man to General Sherman's headquarters. As for you, Miss, we will return you to your home at the first opportunity. For the present, you will remain with us."

The prospect of separation seemed to enrage as much as to dismay her.

"I want nothing from you!" she exclaimed. "I hate you all from the bottom of my heart! Whatever harm you intend to do him, I am ready to share."

Her evident hatred was too much for her composure. She told the commander what she thought of him with unmistakable emphasis, and let those

who have never enjoyed the doubtful pleasure ot having their pictures drawn before their faces in the most uncomplimentary colors, or who have never been exposed defenceless to the attacks of a thoroughly angry woman, imagine, if they can, our feelings, as we stood there, compelled to listen silently to the flood of bitterness poured on our devoted heads by our fair prisoner.

To inspire a pretty girl with wrath and contempt is unpleasant, to say the least; to have her tell you so plainly and forcibly, is worse still; but to have this information conveyed as it was to us, by a tongue as fearless as our own swords, and a great deal sharper, is an experience no man need covet, and perhaps it is superfluous to say we did not enjoy it. If we had taken her by surprise, she certainly bid fair to return the compliment by taking us by storm.

Finally, her wrought up feelings found relief in tears. The officer, affected by her desperation, approached to offer consolation, but she made a hysterical rush towards him with both hands outstretched, as if to do injury to his face. He caught her wrists and soon the storm of anger having

passed, she became more calm and accepted a seat that was offered her.

We could afford to waste no time. Our important errand admitted of no delay.

It was then decided to send both of the prisoners to Gen. T. W. Sherman's headquarters. An ambulance was prepared, and under a good guard, they were despatched to that destination. Both accepted the situation calmly, and began their journey without a parting word to our officers.

The regiment in a short time arrived at Clinton—a charming town, consisting mostly of frame houses with large porches and well-kept lawns, showing not only the property of the cotton planters who owned them, but excellent taste in house architecture as well. We were greatly surprised to learn that the people had heard nothing of our hard fight the day before, and it made us hope that General Greason had succeeded in driving the Confederate cavalry into Port Hudson. Nothing of moment occurred during the two days we remained in the town.

The third day we were on the line of the investment of Port Hudson with our division of the Nineteenth Corps.

CHAPTER III.

THE FORLORN HOPE.

Our first intimation of the identity of the two captives came several days later.

General Banks, assistant adjutant general, sent an order to our commanding officer to furnish him with full information about the capture of Miss Alice Batheley and Captain B. Latimer. The special inquiry, of course, excited curiosity, and hundreds of questions were asked. First, we learned that Captain Latimer had been sent along with a squad of prisoners to Baton Rouge, by the very road on which we had marched. Near the place of our own fight, the guard was attacked by Confederates, and in the excitement Captain Latimer escaped. The Union men had a hard fight, and barely got away from their assailants.

Captain Buckley, commanding the squad, was afterwards placed under arrest—not so much, we learned, for losing his prisoners, but because he had special instructions to look out for Captain Latimer, who was

a West Point graduate, and the best topographical engineer the Confederates had in that locality. They knew full well that should he get back into Port Hudson, he would prove a most undesirable enemy.

The siege was dragging from day to day, from week to week, until it got to be from month to month.

Charge after charge had been made with no result. We succeeded in exploding the redoubt and citadel, but it accomplished nothing. As we rushed in, it was only to find ourselves in deserted earthworks, faced by inner lines of fortified strongholds. Indeed, the unfaltering industry of the Confederates, and their apparent knowledge of our movements, passed our comprehension. It seemed impossible for us to prepare a surprise of any kind. They were always ready to receive and to repulse us.

Fortunately, no hostile force wandered in our rear. The country back of us was free and unoccupied, except by ourselves, and the plantations whose occupants had become reconciled to the presence of Union troops.

Among these was the well-known Batheley plantation, one of the largest in East Feliciana parish. The house was one of those commodious, low-roofed residences of the South, with its wealth of verandas

and porches, located in the midst of a great lawn, and almost hid from sight by the tall trees that gave it an abundance of delightful shade. Its hospitality was gradually opened to our officers, and before the siege, which in time became so tiresome to our men, had progressed very far, it was no unusual sight to see several Union officers visit the mansion to pay their respects to the ladies who were the sole occupants, the men being away in the Confederate service.

The family consisted of three—Mrs. Batheley, a lady of about fifty years of age, tall, dignified and matronly, and her two daughters. The elder was Miss Alice, who fell into our hands while she was returning home from Clinton with Captain Latimer, and who was subsequently released by General Sherman. She affected to have forgotten the unpleasant features of her capture, and received the Union officers at her home with all the charming grace that characterizes the Southern woman. She was a tall brunette, with eyes of almost fiery brightness, lips expressive of resolution, and a smile which, though beautiful, was too dignified to be genial. She was a very close observer, and a sharp, shrewd questioner. Her sister Blanche was a soft,

petite blonde, very unlike Miss Alice, but a great favorite.

The prominent officers were not only welcomed to the Batheley mansion, but were always invited to call again. Indeed, it became no uncommon sight to see the two sisters riding in company with United States officers through the camps.

Miss Alice became as much interested in the weapons of war as any of our men. New works or batteries always received her attention, and she was such a delightful and appreciative listener, that frequently many of the officers took pleasure in explaining to her various things in which ordinary women would take no concern. We knew, of course, that they had Southern feelings and sympathies, but they were helpless and unable to do us harm, and it would have been a shame for us to have treated them otherwise than in a most courteous manner. Even a guard was placed around the house to protect them from intruders and marauders. In fact, some of the boys called them the mother and daughters of the regiment, and if occasionally the officers mixed a little more gallantry in their protecting attentions than was altogether consistent with the dignity of the fatherly

character, let it be remembered that when susceptible young soldiers adopt themselves as fathers to beautiful and fascinating maidens, it is not always possible for their thoughts to retain the strictly paternal cast that the situation requires. Indeed, several of the "venerable fathers" were seized with acute symptoms of poetry, and strangely enough, suffered severely from violent agitation during the secret composing process to which they subjected themselves, the results frequently being even more miserable than the process itself.

We made very slow progress in our campaign. Repeatedly but vainly we tried to storm one of the angles of the fortifications, until it seemed as if a guardian angel was always there to notify the Confederate commander when and where to mass his troops.

After a number of resultless attempts, General Banks determined to carry the work by a coup de main.

With that in view, he called for a volunteer force of one thousand men from his whole army to lead a last attack upon the fort. We had met with so many reverses that the recruiting process was tedious beyond any expectation. The men were

too chary of danger to voluntarily offer themselves as victims to the enemy's guns. At the end of the first week the roll did not muster three hundred and fifty men. The second and third weeks scarcely raised this number to four hundred. But that force was deemed sufficient to lead a division by night assault. Col. Berbridge, of Connecticut, volunteered to command and all arrangements were made for a last and determined attack. The four hundred men were divided into two sections, and each was placed under the bravest and most resolute officers.

Notification was given early in the morning that the dash would be made that night. The brave four hundred spent the most of the day writing letters to the dear ones at home, their sweethearts and their friends, describing the dangers before them, and the probabilities of falling in the fight. And in case they should be killed, they begged to be remembered as having died in the service of their country with their faces bravely to the enemy. They wrote these words, prompted by no idle sentimentality, but from a deep conviction that the night's work would end their military careers. They knew the bravery and audacity of the Con-

federates, and with fearful odds against them, they apprehended the worst.

Supper that night was a deeply serious affair. It was looked upon by four hundred daring men as their last meal on earth, and the impressive silence in which they ate, told vividly the wrought-up condition of their feelings.

The plans of the attack were all arranged. The four hundred—known as the "Forlorn Hope Party" —were to lead with ladders and ropes to scale the walls; then a brigade of infantry, with some engineers to tear down the parapets; then another brigade, together with Nimes and the Vermont Gray Horse batteries. The signal of the assault was to be the bugle sound of "good-night," at nine o'clock, which, being heard every night in the camp, would arouse no suspicion on the part of the Confederates.

At half-past eight the tattoo sounded. The men took their places for the advance; the forces were drawn up, eager to proceed, so as to end the anxiety that was burdening their minds; the time slipped slowly away, and a few minutes more would send the boys to a costly victory or a more costly

defeat; every heart was beating for the sound of the signal.

But thank heaven! it never came.

Just before nine o'clock orders passed along the lines for us to regain our former positions. "What is the matter?" asked hundreds of men of one another. No one could answer.

The mystery was not solved until next day.

CHAPTER IV.

DISCOVERING A SPY.

Lieutenant Hall had charge of the guard at the Batheley mansion.

Being a handsome, polite young fellow, he was treated with great consideration and kindness by the ladies. In return he did them many little services for which they professed deep appreciation. He found his task a pleasant one, and the ladies appeared to enjoy his company as greatly as he did theirs. Consequently there was no inconsiderable friendship between Hall, the protector, and the Batheleys, the protected.

The Lieutenant often wondered why Miss Alice walked alone through the grove every evening about twilight. He would have gladly suggested himself as a companion in these lonely strolls, but something in her manner checked every attempt at such a proposal, and no doubt a little pique sharpened his wonder on the subject.

At first he attributed it to a love of romance, but as Miss Alice was more a woman of realities than of fancies he had a vague suspicion that there was some hidden cause for her unusual action. It certainly did not seem natural for a young and pretty girl to be wandering by herself in the gloaming with a handsome, dashing young officer within easy reach—it was contrary to all precedent—and like the melancholy Dane when *he* discovered a solitary pedestrian on the premises, the gallant Lieutenant began to suspect that something was rotten in the estate of Batheley.

One evening, after the sun went down, he saw her taking the customary stroll, and letting his curiosity get the better of his politeness, he joined her in the grove. As he approached he noticed that she was agitated, and by no means solicitous for his society, but he affected to see nothing

unusual in her manner. After awhile, however, he could not refrain from saying:

"You seem nervous this evening."

"Oh, no!" she said, "I only feel sorry for your poor men, for I'm afraid you will be defeated to-night again."

"Is there to be an attack to-night?"

"Why, yes; did you not know?"

"I had not heard of it."

"I thought everybody knew that," she responded; and then she proceeded to scan the horizon carefully towards Port Hudson.

They had a full sweep of the country in that direction.

A few minutes afterwards an incident happened, so slight in itself that Hall came near missing its real significance. He had noticed a pigeon flying swiftly towards them, but he did not pay especial heed to it, until a little later it alighted on Miss Alice's shoulder. She took the bird in her hands and began caressing it. Presently it flew a short distance from her. As it did so Hall imagined he saw a roll of paper affixed to its leg. The bird, however, came back, and Miss Alice, bidding the Lieutenant good-evening, walked towards the house with the pigeon still fluttering around her shoulder.

She had not more than reached the door before a terrible suspicion took possession of Hall. Was the bird a carrier pigeon? Was Miss Alice Batheley a Confederate spy, in communication with Port Hudson? How did she know of the night attack? The questions demanded explanation.

He determined to solve the mystery. The light of the lamp showed him the room into which Miss Alice had gone. It was on the second story. Hall carefully removed his shoes, clamored noiselessly up the portico, and, to his joy, found a small aperture in the window.

Immediately he saw how correct were his suspicions. Miss Alice and Miss Blanche were alone in the room. With a pair of scissors they were cutting the small roll of paper from the pigeon's leg.

There was only one thing to be done, and he did not hesitate.

He rushed into the apartment. The sight of him was enough of itself to tell the sisters that their secret was discovered, and Miss Blanche fainted from fright, while her stronger sister tried frantically to protect the dove. So fiercely did she struggle that by main force she kept Hall at a distance. Goaded on by anger, she fought with the desperation of a woman, and the strength of a man. Hall

called his men, and they overpowered the fair warrior as gently as they could. But even then the bird had to be taken from her, for she refused to give it up.

"I arrest you both as spies," said the Lieutenant, and the ladies, seeing further resistance useless, submittted without remonstrance.

He got possession of the paper. It was written in hand-writing extremely fine, and read as follows:

"Your message received just in time. We are getting ready to surprise the surprisers. How can we thank you for your goodness? Were it not for your messages, we could not hold out another week, for we are now one against two. I shall command a battery to-night. Alice, pray for my success, and remember that I think of you always. God bless you. LATIMER."

As soon as the ladies were safely under arrest, Hall lost no time in bridling a horse. He rode swiftly to headquarters, and explained what had taken place. The commander saw that he had been outwitted by a female spy. He decided to prevent bloodshed.

And that is why he countermanded the orders.

CHAPTER V.

CONDEMNED TO BE SHOT.

The next day the prisoners were brought before the commanding officer.

Mrs. Batheley was repentant and bowed down with grief. Miss Blanche was, "like Niobe, all tears." But Miss Alice stood calm and defiant. Her face had not a sign of fear. She looked the officers straight in the face, and in the superior contempt which flashed from her eyes there was proclaimed a bold indifference to the fate awaiting her. Her tightly compressed lips carried out the picture of heroic determination, daring and impenitence.

She was aggressive from the start.

No sooner had she been brought before the officers than she began to upbraid the Union army and all those who were in the hearing of her voice. She applied the bitterest language to the commander and stigmatized him with words, which, though not vulgar, were all the more unwelcome

because a woman spoke them. The commander appealed to her to restrain her feelings, and to respect his position and rank. Unless there were some mitigating circumstances, he said, the stern rules of military discipline would compel him to have her shot as a common spy. For this reason he begged her to be quiet. But the more he beseeched, the more she seemed disposed to disregard his entreaties. She fearlessly said that she was glad of our defeat; that she was proud of the part she had taken in it, and that she felt no repentance in anything she had done.

St. Clair, a professional lawyer and a staff officer, offered to plead her case and to exert himself to overcome the prejudice that was fast forming against her. At the furthest the other two ladies were accessories to the crime, and they were only kept under arrest for the time.

But Miss Alice was ordered to appear before a drum-head court-martial the next morning.

With all the prejudice, there was a general sympathy for the fair prisoner, and hope was entertained that moderation might be exerted in her extraordinary case. The court met in a large hospital tent prepared for the occasion. The intense

excitement which abounded everywhere, reached even the dignitaries who acted as judges. The only person unaffected was the accused. She faced the whole proceeding with such calm, immovable composure that even those who hated her crime could not help but admire her nobility.

The trial opened and progressed amid oppressive silence.

The evidence against the prisoner was conclusive. In vain Lieutenant St. Clair tried to gain time for his client, but the necessities of war were imperative and the time could not be granted. Then he tried to give a rose-colored meaning to the despatch, which was displayed in the court, by saying that it was in cipher, and therefore only to be understood by the lady who received it. Then he waxed eloquent. He described her womanly qualities, her filial affection, her love of home, and even went so far as to slip in a few compliments to her beauty. And to cap the climax of the wonderful defence, he ended his speech in the most approved legal way by entering for his client a plea of insanity. His address had a telling effect.

As soon as he had finished speaking, Miss Alice arose to her feet, and, in ringing tones, exclaimed,

"No, No! Gentlemen, I will stand no such nonsense. I am not and never have been insane. What I have done, I have done knowingly and purposely, and I am not afraid to say so. Enter the plea of guilty if you wish and do your worst. When you first arrested me, with Captain Latimer, I told you that we both belonged to the Confederate service. I meant what I said, and I am no spy. If you doubted my word it is no fault of mine, for I frankly told you what you now know to be true. But to show you how little I care for your decision, I will say that the carrier pigeon was especially trained by Captain Latimer and me for the work it has so successfully done. Now you know why you have been defeated so many times—now you know why the noble Confederates have always been ready for your attacks—now you know why they have been able to kill so many of your men—now you can see how much a woman-of-war can do, when she has enough resolution to bear her up and spur her on. I am proud of my work, and to the end I shall be proud of it still. I hate your cause, I hate the sight of you, and I despise any offer of mercy you can give me. There are more honest, noble-hearted men over yonder in that Confederate

fort, than in all the armies of the blue-coats put together. I am a Confederate woman, and I want no pity from any of you. Now, end this farce of a trial as soon as you can, and pass your sentence. I am ready to hear it."

It is futile to attempt to describe the effect of these words. Never had men heard a woman so audacious, so brave and yet so eloquent; but it was the eloquence that condemned—not the eloquence that saved.

To the court no other course was possible than a verdict of guilty. Thus they decided, and she was sentenced to be shot as a spy. The execution was fixed at eight o'clock the next morning.

The tent in which the court-martial had been held was given up entirely to the prisoner. Until "Good night" was sounded, Mrs. Batheley and Miss Blanche were permitted to visit the condemned and offer her whatever consolation lay within their power. Miss Alice was still calm, and she answered the tears of her mother and sister with words of love, solace and encouragement. When the bed-time-hour came, at nine o'clock, the two ladies retired to their own quarters and left Miss Alice alone.

Sympathy for her became universal.

Even the officers who passed the dreadful sentence were moved to pity when they contemplated the fate of a woman so pure and beautiful. The thought, too, that she was a promised bride, loving with all the intensity of the passionate Southern nature, lent a sad and romantic pathos to her fate. She was to die, and die ignominiously, with youth, beauty, love, to make life sweet to her. Under the very shadow of the walls that held her lover, she was to be parted from him forever, without even the poor consolation of looking once more upon his face.

All this, of course, had no pertinent bearing on her sentence, but its influence was none the less powerful, and even her judges felt its force, while in the majority of the men it almost effaced the gravity of her offence.

The verdict was thought to be too severe. Her sex seemed to deserve more lenient consideration. She should have been sent a prisoner to Fort Warren or Fort Lafayette. But sympathy was useless, for the sentence was passed.

That night the guard around the prisoner's tent was doubled.

The men comprising it did not anticipate their task with any evidence of pleasure, but duty as soldiers compelled them to accept the responsibility. They began the watch with a sadness that was deepened as the minutes flew by. The thought of a young life so near its doom made the night more gloomy than it really was. No wonder, then, long after the tattoo had died away, long after the lights had faded into darkness, long after the minutes had slipped into hours—no wonder the guardsmen stopped suddenly as they heard the murmurings of a sweet, plaintive voice, uttering the supplication of a brave heart. Ah, how sweetly she prayed! How earnestly! How touchingly!

She called upon the God of the helpless and defenceless to look down in His great mercy upon her. She thanked Him for the strength he had given her to face death for her country and her people. She had not sought glory or worldly fame, but in serving her country she deemed herself to be serving Him. "Bless our cause," she prayed, "and comfort the bruised and bleeding hearts throughout this great land. I pray Thy special grace for those nearest and dearest to me. Be with them in the hour of affliction and help them to

bear the burdens that Thou hast seen fit to lay upon them. Be merciful to him who was to have been my husband," and here for the first time the sweet tones faltered, "carry him unharmed through all this terrible conflict, and grant that we may meet in that better land beyond the tomb. And these things I ask in Thy Son's name. Amen."

A prayer so sweet would have touched a rougher heart than a soldier's. The guardsmen's eyes wet with tears, told of its power more eloquently than words. It had gone straight to their souls.

That night a violent storm arose. It lasted until dawn, but by sunrise it had disappeared as suddenly as it had come.

In the morning the brigade assembled for the execution. The band played solemn funeral dirges. The soldiers formed in three sides of a square. At one end was a coffin, and opposite was the firing party of twelve men. Six guns were loaded; six were empty. These were distributed promiscuously among the men, so that not one of them could tell whether or not he had fired a fatal shot.

The officer of the guard raised the flap of the tent, and saw the prisoner sitting by the table with her face buried in her hands. In a solemn voice

he read the order of the day and the decision of the court-martial which condemned her to be shot at eight o'clock. The chaplain gave her words of consolation, but in it all she remained unmoved. Questions were put to her, but there were no responses.

Was she dead? Apprehending the fearful truth, the officer approached and touched her upon the shoulder. She did not move. He tried to raise her head. As he did so, the figure tumbled to pieces.

It was nothing but a dummy, rigged out in Miss Alice Batheley's dress and bonnet, and stuffed with Spanish moss and straw.

She had escaped.

The only information we ever received of her was just after the war, when she sent our commanding officer a marked copy of a Clinton paper, containing the notice of the marriage of Miss Alice Batheley to Captain B. Latimer.

It is a well known fact that a few weeks before Andrew Johnson retired from the presidency, he pardoned two soldiers sentenced to the Dry Tortu-

gas for life for assisting a prisoner to escape. These were the men who guarded Miss Batheley's tent. Her prayer had conquered their hearts, and, aided by the storm, they gave her back her life, her liberty, and her happiness.

THE GUNNER OF "LADY DAVIS."

CHAPTER I.

A SURPRISE.

No advance guard ever received a greater surprise.

The Confederates had been driven from their rifle pits on the banks of the Mississippi. We rushed forward, expecting to find them either fleeing over the ground or entrenched behind redoubts bristling with guns.

But we were disappointed.

We could see their position at Port Hudson. We could view easily the surrounding landscape. But no skirmishers could be found. All had disappeared under the cover of the abattis. Not a sign of life disturbed the serenity of the earthworks in front of us. They seemed deserted except for one thing—the Stars and Bars floating from a high staff.

What further puzzled us was the fact that the parapet of a redoubt is usually lined with guns, especially when it is built to flank a great line of earthwork defences. It is the key of the position, as the only ingress and egress of the fortification is a subterranean passage.

Nor did our surprise stop here. Just as we were coming out of the woods and nearing a fork in the road, we suddenly faced, firmly nailed to a tree, a large wooden sign whose inscription in red letters gave us to understand that we had been expected. Decorated with a skull and cross-bones, it read:

YANKS, BEWARE!

This is the Sure Road to Hell!

It was not a pleasant greeting, and it did not add to our comfort. The boys, of course, put on as bold a front as possible, but more than one, inclined to be superstitious, handed over tokens for safe keeping, and gave messages to be delivered in case of accident.

Here we were at dusk in full view of the enemy's works, and within easy rifle shot. In vain did we

try to draw their fire. Not a gun, not a bayonet, not a cap, could be seen above the parapet.

We slept on our arms that night. Only the breadth of the abattis separated us and the enemy. Daylight found us awake and apprehensive. Their flag was still there. But yet there were no signs of life; not even a cloud of dust indicated the movements of troops or guns.

Yet we knew—having learned by experience—that General Gardner, the Confederate commander, had from twelve to fifteen thousand men in this very place.

When Farragut came up the river with his fleet, the fortifications were crimsoned with fire.

Fully one hundred and fifty guns lined the river front. The fire had been so terrific that two only, Farragut's own ship and its tender, were able to pass the fort. The rest of the fleet was beaten back, with the loss of the largest frigate, the famous old Mississippi.

The official report stated that the Mississippi had been pierced from stem to stern by large calibre rifle shots, fired from a redoubt flanking the south end of Port Hudson, right on the banks of the river.

It is well known such guns must be mounted en barbette, which means so elevated as to fire over the parapet, the guns being on fixed carriages, with the half-moon swing. They are, therefore, in constant view, with the gunners placed in exceedingly hazardous position, especially when riflemen approach the works near enough to pick off the gunners.

But not one of these guns could be seen, and all sorts of conjectures were made as to the cause of their absence.

The generally accepted theory was that Farragut had silenced them all as he passed up the river. Yet the experienced soldier could perceive the cool and cautious calculations of the Confederate commander in not wasting a single cartridge.

It was on the 27th of May that General Banks imprudently sent a flag of truce to General Gardner, demanding his immediate and unconditional surrender, or that the non-combatants—women and children—be at once sent out of Port Hudson, as he would assault the place within three hours.

The reply was courteous but firm: None would leave the fort, and as to surrender, never!

While these negotiations were going on, the Union forces were getting into position for a general assault. As soon as the answer was received, orders were given to fire the abattis, consisting of felled timber, the most of it very green.

This abattis played so important a part in the engagement which followed, that it is well to describe it. The fortifications had been built in the thick pine woods, and the space in front, for the breadth of about four hundred yards, had been cleared by felling the trees, and letting the trunks and boughs fall as they would, making an entanglement through which it was difficult to advance.

An orderly approach of a line of attack was impossible, and an assault thus delayed would be exposed to a withering fire of musketry and grape from the works. It was, therefore, necessary to remove this obstruction by setting it on fire. As the wind was against us, there was for a long while a blinding and suffocating smoke, but very little flame.

For over two hours thousands of men waited for the flames to do their destructive work, and give free passage to our over-anxious troops.

But the fire burned so slowly that General T. W. Sherman, who was then in command of the first

division of the Nineteenth Army Corps, became impatient, and ordered the Third Brigade to charge through the burning abattis.

Then the boys recalled the dreadful inscription of the red-painted sign. "*Boys, this is the road to hell.*"

Sure enough, in a few moments we were in a very hell. Men overcome by the smoke, fell among the brush only to be literally roasted alive. Their agonized and terrified faces as they sank in that fearful place, made pictures never to be forgotten, and added to the horrors around us. Yells of mortal agony from the tortured wretches as the flames grew fiercer, fed by their human fuel, shrieks and curses of frightful despair, moans and feeble calls for help, mingled with hissing and roaring of the shells, joined in horrid din until it seemed, indeed, as if hell itself was really opening under our feet, to engulf us alive in its fiery jaws. Horrors heaped on horrors, victims on victims, as we went on. Some fell, pierced by bullet or fragment of shell, with wounds that did not cause loss of consciousness, but only chained them to the ground amid the blazing boughs, hissing like serpents of fire around them.

No human intelligence could conceive the awful reality of this horrible scene; a demon's ingenuity

could hardly have exceeded its intensity of agony.

A hail storm of shot and shell was then pouring from the enemy's batteries.

One of the most prominent victims was Captain Adam Badeau. He fell, wounded in the left foot. The ball, entering from the top, penetrated entirely through his foot, and came out at the heel. His pain was terrible, as the ball in its passage shattered many small bones.

Terrible were the thoughts of those yet unharmed who saw the dead and dying lying around them, and still were obliged to turn a deaf ear and close their eyes to all this suffering. To pause to help a companion or even a brother at the moment of assault is impossible; for it is considered cowardly to stop while in the line of attack, if only to assist the wounded. The moment is critical. There is no time for pity. You must smother all the tender feelings of your heart, and move forward. A soldier's duty at such a time has no room for mercy; however the horrors of war may tear his heart, he has no choice but to obey that duty's imperative call.

In this famous charge, May 27, 1863, comparatively few were able to make their way through

the abattis, the outer edge of which was about a quarter of a mile from the earthworks.

But those who did manage to do so, found that they had then penetrated to the windward of the suffocating smoke, and were in full view of the parapet. What a contrast to the appearance of the place a few days before!

Port Hudson was enveloped in flame, from the flash of hundreds of cannons and thousands of muskets. Grape, canister, shells and solid shot were literally ploughing the ground in front of us, over which we were preparing to charge.

But suddenly we felt a new horror.

While about two hundred of us, who had managed to get through the abattis and were separated from the main body by the over-hanging black smoke, were waiting for the approach of the others, we discovered to our dismay, that a light battery of our own force had wheeled into action back of us, and was answering at random the shots from a huge gun that had made its appearance on the earthworks. We were in a trap, and between the fire of our own and the enemy's guns. To stand up was sure death, and the only thing we could do was to throw ourselves flat on the earth.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEMON GUN.

Over fifty of our number fell victims to the double fire.

Nothing could be done but watch, wait and study. While in that critical position, each man bidding the loved ones at home a silent farewell, attention was drawn to one of the most wonderful-looking guns ever seen in action. We well knew that there were some heavy pieces of artillery within the enemy's works, and had long wondered why none were in sight; but we were not prepared for such a demon as we were now facing. In the center of the chief redoubt was a large, black mass, which would gradually rise to the top of the parapet. When it had reached its proper elevation, we had before us the most appalling engine of destruction we had ever beheld.

We had seen its movements, or else we would have doubted it to be in the power of man to handle it with such ease and rapidity.

No sooner was the gun in position than the parapet was lined with infantry, whose well directed volleys protected the gunner by drawing the attention of the sharp-shooters from him. Under cover of this arrangement, the gunner would spring up, aim the gun and disappear, all in less time than it takes to tell.

And then this infernal-machine, loaded, it seemed, almost to the muzzle, would belch forth upon us its volleys of death.

We could go neither backward nor forward. Behind us flamed and smoked the abattis. A wall of fire isolated us from all our friends. In that entanglement the screams of the wounded men could be heard with heart-sickening distinctness. Through the black pall of smoke, hissed the grape and shells that our own artillery was firing, ignorant of our position. In front of us stretched the long curtain of breastworks, sheeted with musketry fire, and in the salient was that hideous piece of heavy artillery, which moved as easily as if animated by a gleeful devil, delighting in destruction.

It made the heart stand still every time it vomited forth its messages of death.

We squeezed ourselves as flat to the earth as possible, and thanked God after each discharge that we were still alive. That gun was evidently a singularly perfect piece of mechanism. It was a mystery to many of us. It arose loaded to the surface, and in less than a minute was aimed and fired. The recoil would carry it back to a place of safety under the parapet, where it would be reloaded, again to raise its ugly black muzzle above the bastion. Everything about it moved like clockwork. The only sign of life connected with it was a handsome, athletic young fellow with long, flowing hair. He would rapidly mount the gun carriage as it rose, run his eye along the sight, motion with his hand to have it moved to the right or left, as the case might require. His leaping down was the signal to fire.

There was a fearful fascination in watching all this.

The havoc made in our small squad of two hundred was terrible. Our light battery, beyond the smoke of the burning abattis, was still firing at random, and we felt that something must be done to silence that big gun, or our small party must all perish. One after another of us tried to shoot the

gunner, but he bore a charmed life. If a man dared to raise his head, it soon sank with a wound in it. If that gunner was only killed, probably his successor would not be so bold.

Colonel Abel Smith, of the One Hundred and Sixty-fifth New York, bravely stood up and aimed at the fearless gunner, but only to throw up his hands and fall a dead man.

Major Carr tried to avenge him, and he fell wounded in the leg.

We had now been in this position for more than an hour. The abattis was still burning, and with increased fury, completely shutting off all retreat.

But suddenly, no one knew why, the direction of the gun's fire was changed. There was less smoke and more flame in the abattis, and though the fire of the gun was more rapid, it pointed more to the right of us. Shells and solid shot were now taking the place of the grape and canister that had been aimed at us. Our batteries entered into a regular duel with it, and drew from us the volcanic fire which threatened our annihilation.

We breathed more freely.

Added to the fifty out of the two hundred of our brave boys now dead, was an equal number, more

or less wounded. It was now about six o'clock; but we feared that in an hour darkness would set in, and render our position still more uncomfortable; for a light breeze was fanning the flame of the burning timber back of us, and the glare would light up the place so that we would be picked out individually by riflemen on the fortifications, for which distinction we by no means hungered.

As the sun went down, the fire which had been burning for five hours, gradually became less intense. A more hopeful feeling began to relieve our fears, but it did not continue long.

That infernal machine in the bastion again opened fire on us with greater rapidity than before. This time, it was accompanied with lighter guns which intensified its horrors. The long-haired gunner seemed to delight in his work. Bullets could not reach him, and he fired away as if he knew his own safety. We could not understand why he recommenced on us. We had had all the fighting we wanted that day, and only asked to be let alone. How devoutly we wished we had never left home!

But, unknown to us, the rest of the brigade were hard at work gathering hats, tin pans, canvas

buckets and all sorts of vessels. They had established a chain of soldiers to carry water from a spring near by to put out the fire, in order to make a passageway through the abattis. The enemy could see all this, but we could not. So, judge of our amazement and joy, when we saw a column of men, headed by T. W. Sherman, coming through what remained of the burning timber. The remnant of our small party arose in a moment, and joined the advancing columns. But, alas! not to go far, for the fire of the terrible gun, as well as that of the infantry, played havoc in our ranks, and we were unable to fill the vacancies made by the balls and shells.

We fell back to our former position, and the first assault on Port Hudson was over.

It was a failure, resulting in a bad defeat to our arms, with General T. W. Sherman, the leader of the charge, minus a leg—the work of the demon gun. One felt that he had lived ten years in those few hours. Many of our comrades of the morning were now cold in death.

CHAPTER III.

AMELIA THE BRIDE.

The next morning dawned beautifully.

It was a bright, glorious summer day, and the golden sunshine upon the waters, the dewdrops on the glistening trees, and the song of the birds, were all in strange and strong contrast to the fire and smoke, shot and shell, and blood and death of the day before. Above was the beauty and peace of nature; below, the ruin and desolation of man. Under the blue sky lay many a brave fellow, whose blood stained the green grass, and from the hastily improvised hospitals came sickening groans from the wounded.

But war is war, and most of us had seen much of it by this time.

Around the mess fires we breakfasted as best we could, drank our coffee and ate our bit of bacon and bread with the relish born of hard and terrible work. And many who, while eating, could not look up without seeing in the distance the body of some

poor fellow who had fallen in the struggle, doubtless thought:

"Maybe this is my last meal. I will do justice to it, such as it is."

Blighted love, crushed ambitions, costly defeats, a lost cause, may all darken a man's life, but he is not utterly heart-broken as long as he can eat his dinner and relish doing it. This is humiliating, but, unfortunately, it is also true.

Lighter thoughts soon fled at the approach of a sad and solemn duty. The sun was not very high when we sent a flag of truce to the Confederate general, asking for a cessation of hostilities for twenty-four hours, so that we might bury our dead. The request was granted, and then one of the most melancholy and distressing tasks that fall to the lot of a soldier, was begun. In the heat of action, the hot rush against the enemy, the excitement of the battle, one may note with a momentary pang that a comrade has fallen on the one side or the other; but it can be almost instantly forgotten, for there is work—urgent, terrible work—ahead.

But when the field is gone over afterwards! Here you find one who was your "chum"—your most intimate friend—to whom you had told your dearest

secrets; who had talked to you of home, and told you to send word to his wife should he fall. And here lies one, a bullet through his heart, with whom yesterday you had angry words. It is with infinite relief you remember that an explanation and a hand-shake had made you friends again.

We did the best we could in putting the poor fellows under the sod. The officers were, as is usual, placed in separate graves. Under the circumstances, it was absolutely impossible to so bury all the dead. Trenches had to be dug for most of the men, but they were laid in them with decency and care. And whenever it was possible to obtain the names and the address of their relatives, by referring to letters and papers found in their pockets, it was always done, and the sad news was conveyed to their families by some one of the officers. When practicable, the graves were marked, and after the war, a number of the bodies so identified, were taken up, and removed to family burial grounds.

Just as we were beginning the sad work, in fact before we had done more than make the preliminary arrangements, the Confederates sent a request that we would allow the body of a young lady, an officer's bride, who had been killed in the engage-

ment, to pass through the lines, for transfer to the home of her parents. Of course, the request was granted.

It was not long before the funeral procession was seen advancing. Slowly it filed out from the sally-port of the redoubt, and with solemn march came nearer and nearer. As the little cortege reached our outposts, it was halted.

The company was not a large one.

Headed by a military band playing a solemn dirge, came a party of Confederate officers of different arms. Two ladies were with them. One of the officers, a young man about twenty-three or four years of age, walked with a firm and erect tread, but the convulsive working of his countenance showed that he was agonized with grief. The body was in an old musket box, rudely nailed down; but there was a wild flower or two upon the improvised coffin, and a bit of green. The bearers were a detailed squad of Confederate soldiers. The scene was one of the most touching and impressive I had ever witnessed.

The cortege had scarcely halted, when a major of our headquarters' staff rode up rapidly, and suddenly threw himself from his horse.

"I am sorry," he said abruptly, in a tone and manner somewhat brusque; "but I have a duty to perform. I must ask that the coffin be opened and searched for despatches that may possibly be concealed. You gentlemen, who, I see, are officers on the other side, will appreciate that in times of war such painful duties are inexorable."

They simply bowed in assent.

But there was a movement of distress among all the spectators. One of the ladies was so much affected by this apparently cruel interruption, that her already over-wrought nerves seemed on the point of giving way. One of our surgeons hastily stepped forward, and revived her by the application of a little ammonia, a vial of which was fortunately in his pocket. She was the sister of the dead bride, and a mere girl scarcely eighteen. Her pale, satin complexion with a faint blush of pink just touching the exquisite skin, was so suggestive of the delicate tints of a tea-rose, that it seemed quite in keeping when the elder lady called her anxiously by that flower's name. Her eyes were of a soft, dark hazel; though small in stature, she was stately and dignified in demeanor, and most winsome withal. When she regained consciousness, she turned one slight

glance of gratitude upon the Doctor, bowed, and resumed her place.

Slowly the nails were withdrawn from the lid of the musket box, one by one, and with great difficulty, as the appliances at hand were naturally of the rudest description. The mourners bore this harrowing delay with a self control almost heroic; the young officer never stirred—only his violently clenched hands betrayed the keen torture he was undergoing.

When the lid was at last raised, there lay the form of one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen. She seemed to be scarcely twenty, but her figure was fully developed, and her face was of surpassing loveliness. The hair was blue-black, and remarkably abundant; her complexion even then of the deep rich olive tint of the far South; the eyelashes long and curving upward, the eyebrows arched most perfectly; cherry lips, a classic nose, a broad forehead, tiny, pink-tinted ears like pearly shells, and a little hand that was a marvel of delicacy and beauty.

Her eyes, alas! were closed—in death.

On her hand was a wedding ring. Her shroud was a plain white dress, sadly eloquent of her

bridal, and on her bosom lay a faded wreath of orange blossoms.

So young—so fair—so soon cut off from life, love and happiness—ah, it was pitiful!

There were signs of emotion on all sides.

The Major himself—brusque as he was and hardened by nature—turned aside for a moment as the young officer came quickly forward and pressed one passionately tender kiss on the cold, calm, face stepping back instantly and standing upright, with folded arms and hat lowered over his brows. The repression of his grief, as if it was too sacred a thing to bare to stranger eyes, was more pathetic than its unrestrained display, and so we all felt it.

"It is hard, but it must be done," said the staff officer, in a tone of husky irritation. "The coffin must be searched."

One of the ladies, with admirable nerve, pleaded that she and the lady with her might lift the body while the examination was being made.

There could be no reply but the simple "yes."

Every corner of the musket box was searched, every fold of the dress; but delicately and reverently. It was with a sigh of relief that the anxious

onlookers heard that all was right—the body might proceed.

While the slow work of nailing down the lid once more was progressing, I asked one of the Confederates who she was.

Looking significantly at the flag of truce, he moved away without reply.

I quietly approached another of his party, and, whispering, repeated the question—in French this time, for he looked to me like a French Creole.

He answered, also under his breath: "Don't you know? It's the wife of the gunner who served Lady Davis."

"Who is Lady Davis? What do you mean?"

"The big gun over there," he hurriedly said, and he pointed to the Demon Gun of the day before. "I should think you had cause enough to know her."

This, and what I learned afterwards from prisoners, explained the fiendish ferocity of the gunner.

When the box was again securely closed, it was placed in one of our ambulances.

The Confederates were about to return to their works when the young officer stepped forward, and in a firm but sad voice, asked:

"Is there any one here in authority who could allow me passage through your lines to the boat which is to carry my wife away from me? The sun is yet very young for the day."

He looked every inch a man. His appeal was beautiful and tender, and, with the pleading of the two ladies, it was too much for the commanding officer.

Permission was granted.

He and both of the ladies were then blindfolded, that they might see nothing of our preparations. The dead girl's fair young sister, with the Doctor, on whose arm she lightly leaned, as a guide, led the mournful procession; following her was the gunner; on each side of him a guard to guide his footsteps. At the steamer the bandages were removed. And when he returned, still under escort, his eyes were covered with a handkerchief again until he had passed still guarded, to his own outposts, all the while under the protection of the flag of truce, and through the extraordinary kindnesses extended to him by the commanding officers and those who, under orders, were with him.

When the river bank was reached, the remains were placed upon the steamer Iberville and taken

to New Orleans, accompanied by the two ladies and a special guard from our corps. From New Orleans, they were removed later to her husband's plantation on the Bayou Teche.

It was a most affecting incident, and one which all who were present have oftentimes recalled in the years since then; yet, soldier-like, an hour after the steamer had left the bank, we were "swapping" coffee for tobacco with the Johnny Rebs, and exchanging newspapers with them, and towards the close of the twenty-four hours of truce, every few minutes we would be scurrying back into positions of safety; for the Confederates amused themselves by placing a lot of cartridges along their line of parapets, and lighting them with matches.

The flash and smoke would make the boys believe that the truce was ended, and firing had recommenced.

There was no lack of courage on either side, but the men didn't by any manner of means wish to be taken unawares.

There was a touching pathos in the romance of the gunner of "Lady Davis" and his bride of three happy but fateful weeks.

He was a young sugar planter, handsome, brave and accomplished, inheriting from his father large estates. The plantations next to his own were owned by an old gentleman, whose eldest daughter, Amelia, became in the days of her youth, the object of the affection, deep and earnest, of the young neighbor.

There was no obstacle to their meetings until just before the war commenced. Then Alphonse Dubreuil pronouncedly opposed the doctrine of secession. His prospective father-in-law, Dr. Chatrand, was an earnest advocate of state's rights, and every thing thereunto appertaining. While the young man always declared he would follow his state, he persisted that it would be foolish for it to go out of the Union.

In the course of a discussion between the two, there were some warm words one day, and Alphonse was forbidden to communicate with Amelia.

When the state joined the seceded Confederation, he went at once into the army as a private, raised as much money as he could to equip a company, and worked unflinchingly with admirable courage. Besides his chosen cause, Amelia and her father were his only thought.

Little by little, the father softened.

Finally, he consented to the marriage. It was solemnized in Port Hudson only three weeks before the engagement of which I have spoken. All ceremony and festivity possible under the circumstances graced the occasion. There were uniforms and dresses, tasteful, if not costly in the eyes of to-day.

He was the proudest man of all along the river; she, the happiest bride.

His wedding made a gala day in Port Hudson. Every one who could be present was there. The feast was not such a one as former times would have spread, but it was notwithstanding, a pleasant and enjoyable entertainment, and after the wedding dinner, there were horse and foot races, target shooting and sports of all kinds for the gallant soldier boys, who turned aside for some happy hours from the grim realities of war, to do honor to their comrade's young and lovely bride.

When the attack came, he took charge of the gun. It has been shown how wonderfully he managed it. There were skill and stern determination with him from first to last. His wife watched him with anxiety and with terror; but these feelings were

suppressed in his presence, and he was always greeted with a smile when he could find time to join her for a few moments. The "Gray Horse Battery" of Vermont, was brought up and opposed to the guns of the enemy—or, rather, *the* gun. Its work was effective. Considerable execution was done. But the most terrible thing it accomplished was the kllling of the wife of Alphonse, the gunner of Lady Davis.

She had been as near as was permitted to her husband. Her natural fears, the horrors around her, could not drive her from his side. She had not left the town, but insisted upon being allowed to stay in the fort near her husband's gun, passionately refusing safety away from him. At last, consent was given for her to occupy one of the bomb-proofs. Here she was comparatively safe; but on this day she became excited by the sound of the firing and the cheers of the men, and rushed out to see if her husband was still untouched.

A fragment of shell from one of the Vermont battery's guns struck her, and with his dear name faltering on her lips, she fell dead before his eyes.

The wretched husband rushed to her, but all was over in an instant. Maddened by his loss, he rose

from the body of his murdered bride and sprang to his gun, anguish and despair driving him to a fierce vengeance for her death. Then it was that the gun turned from the direction of our unfortunate little squad, and aimed at once against the Vermont battery.

Speedily a section was dismantled, and a number of the gunners were killed. It was revenge, deep and bitter, and a smile came over the pale face of the young man as each discharge told. We could not but honor his valor, and when he came with the body of the young wife within our lines, and we discovered who he was, there was no one of us who did not silently respect his grief.

With the shadows of war are the brighter facts of occasional sunshine. Romance touches tragedy. In the course of that funeral procession was born an affection that survived the vicissitudes of war. The young surgeon who gave the ammonia to the young lady and guided her out of the lines, did not forget her sweet, sad face.

A year or two after hostilities had ceased, he returned to that part of the country and settled there. His intention from the first was to find her, and, if possible, to win her.

After many anxious days, he succeeding in discovering the lady of his love.

It was much longer before he could win her consent to a marriage with him, and longer still before her relatives could be persuaded to acquiesce; but finally it was accomplished, and from what I have heard recently, they are living most happily on a lovely little estate, and laying in stores of love and wealth—the one very largely, the other moderately but satisfactorily.

A SACRED TRUST.

CHAPTER I.

A CORPSE AND A SYMBOL.

It was Christmas Day, 1862.

We were in New Orleans, that most interesting of Southern cities. The year had nearly run its course; the festivities of the festival of festivals were approaching their height, and still the air was black and horrible from the smoke of battle for hundreds and hundreds of miles, and in a thousand places the earth was stained with the blood of brave men; but in the midst of that most holy feast, for a while, even the hardest hearts forgot the bitterness of civil conflict and rejoiced in the day and its quieting influences. There were few among the most daring, brave and reckless of our men whose thoughts during that soft Southern afternoon did not turn back to the lessons of home and of

the church, recalling the story of the birth of Him who came to save the world, to bring peace to earth, good will to mankind. And many a soldier bowed a knee to the ground, and prayed to Him that out of all this turmoil and trouble, good might come—good for all the people.

Regimental church services are always peculiarly solemn in time of war, but those we held at the Lower Cotton Press were remarkably impressive. The holy feast, the yearning for home, intensified by the uncertainty of the morrow—all combined to elevate the soul in prayer to Him, the Man of Sorrows, who was born to suffer for the sins of mankind.

But suddenly were heard the clear notes of the bugle. Then came instant hurry and movement, the clanking of spurs, and before long, the beat of the drum.

"Officers to quarters," was the bugle's summons, and at once military discipline taught the men of the command now to regard their regimental flag, as does the devotee the spire of his church. Instead of the chime of the bells or the grand tones of the organ, their music was the rattle of the drum and the bugle blast, and instead of the appealing voice of

the minister, they listened to the sharp command of superior officers.

The first order received read, "Hold your regiment in readiness to march at a moment's notice."

Thirty minutes afterwards came a second order: "Take knapsacks and proceed to the Lake House, Lake Ponchartrain. There you will find further instructions."

This looked like warfare. But where? It was all decidedly indefinite, and this very fact added to its effect upon the men. No one knew what was in store for us.

On one point, however, we were unanimous. We were sorry to leave New Orleans.

Those were happy days in the Crescent City, and even now we look back with pride and satisfaction to the peaceful record we left behind us; for during our occupation of the city there was not so much as a street fight to mar the tranquillity and to break the ties of esteem which drew the soldiers to the citizens. We had made many friends among the warm-hearted and hospitable people since we had been the safe martial guardians of the city's peace, and outside of our military duties, we found time and opportunity to cultivate a social fondness

for those over whom we were for the time placed in authority. It was a sad duty to say good-bye to these friends and to the comfortable quarters which we had decorated for the holiday season. All expectations of a pleasant Christmas week were swept away, and only regrets were left. The orders had come and obedience followed.

The next morning found our men in line, ready to march from a happy past and an enjoyable present to an unknown future.

The command, "Forward," sounded, and the Duryee Zouaves, One Hundred and Sixty-fifth New York Volunteers, marching, as they always did, with almost faultless step, moved from the barracks. Along the Levee they went, while hundreds of citizens stood along the line eagerly watching their advance. They reached the Esplanade, proceeded by way of Carondelet street to Canal street, and then with fervent good-byes and a good swinging step, they were off to Lake Ponchartrain. The single tune that the band played on this bright and cheerful morning was "The Girl I Left Behind Me," and the spirits of the soldiers chimed gaily in with the melody of the song. The scene of departure reminded me strongly of the time when a party of

the same regiment—the Duryee Zouaves—left Baltimore to join McClellan's army on the Peninsula.

The distance of seven to eight miles to the Lake House, on Lake Ponchartrain, was easily traversed in a few hours.

There we bivouacked until the next morning.

The sealed orders proved to be instructions to proceed and explore the Dismal Swamp region of the lake, and to investigate the condition of the railroad which for dozens of miles runs through that region of mud, bayous and alligators, on nothing but trestle-works and bridges. In the course of this investigation, we were to push forward until we had fully ascertained if there was any large body of Confederates in that locality.

It was a hazardous expedition, but our men were generally ambitious for adventure, and they entered upon the task before them with a firm determination to do their duty bravely and well.

It was a beautiful evening. Over the rippling surface of the lake the camp fires sent a flickering light, which the waves caught up and broke into a thousand glittering fragments, flashing and dancing with such a graceful confusion of brilliant effect,

that the men contemplated the scene with more than ordinary appreciation.

A sound night's sleep in the open field left every one refreshed and invigorated for the work that was to follow.

The whole regiment embarked at early morning in five small schooners that had been sent for its transportation. These vessels were towed by a little tug of the slow-but-sure species. The five schooners, crowded with soldiers, followed one another consecutively, being attached together by ropes, while at the head the small but energetic tug fretted away, belching out clouds of smoke, and frantically but slowly pulling along the big load behind it. No wind was blowing, and the sails were not hoisted, so that all progress depended upon the efforts of the tug.

The trip was exceedingly agreeable. The day was clear, the atmosphere pleasant, and every delight of sky and water mingled with the far-away fringes of brilliant forests to please the imaginative and scenery-loving members of the party.

The spirits of the men soon rose to the highest pitch, and they abandoned themselves with almost boyish zest to all sorts of antics and diversions.

The band was made to play its liveliest tunes, and the clowns and funny men of the regiment were compelled to go through their tricks, surrounded by crowds of attentive admirers. Fired by their success others attempted more daring feats. Over one of the tightly drawn ropes connecting the schooners, a venturesome soldier decided to cross. His success at first was excellent; but as he reached the middle there was a moment of indecision; one leg went into the air and gracefully poised, the other slipped, and—

"Man overboard!"

He was fished out of the lake amidst great laughter, and he at once proceeded to make a clothes-line of the schooner's rigging, in order to dry his soaked uniform.

Tight-rope walking was left out of the program of entertainment after this experience, but the solitary debut made plenty of fun, and the dripping hero was warmly pressed for an encore.

With such light hearts did we face an expedition that all knew teemed with dangers, some of them even unknown.

The distance across the lake to Pass Man Chac was about thirty miles.

We reached the entrance of the pass in the afternoon. There the commanding officer left the main body of the regiment in charge of the schooners, and with thirty picked men proceeded in the tug up the bayou to where the railroad crossed the stream.

It was not an attractive neighborhood.

Everywhere the surroundings showed a desolate country, destitute of every sign of human habitation.

The land was a tangled growth of swampy vegetation, whose foliage, so deeply colored and so dense, seemed to emit poisonous vapors and contagious diseases. The gloomy waters of the bayou and the tributary creeks were sluggish and full of decayed weeds and leaves.

As the tug made its way up the stream, birds of beautiful plumage flitted from the trees and soared clamorously in the air, as if some monster had invaded their home.

But it was in the waters that the most interesting part of swamp life was to be seen.

Alligators by the thousand abounded everywhere. The noise of the boat aroused them from their sleep. They stretched their long heads out of the water, peered for a moment at the strangers, and

then disappeared. Those on shore gave several barks, moved uneasily away and joined their relatives in the muddy depths of the bayou. On every side, wherever the eye reached, alligators were visible. They are not handsome reptiles, and the denizens of this swamp had their full share of ugliness. Their dirty appearance, their muddy-looking forms, their sullen eyes, all repelled, and as they were congregated thickly in these dismal depths, the picture was about as odious as the imagination could well conceive.

The contrast between the clean, broad streets and happy life of New Orleans, and the venomous-looking morasses teeming with savage animals of the swamps, seemed like a dream of Hades after the happiness of heaven.

When our little party reached the railroad bridge, we found that it had been destroyed.

We at once began a reconnoissance of our surroundings. No human being except ourselves was in sight.

Six of us went to the east.

We had proceeded—or rather waded—scarcely a quarter of a mile through the pools and treacherous

bogs of the swamp before we came upon a tract of dry land, perhaps a half acre in extent, raised several feet above the surrounding ground. An immense swarm of alligators almost literally covered it. To scare them away the men fired several shots, and immediately the animals with all possible haste made for a lagoon near by, with a general chorus of rasping barks. We hurried along to get out of the damp bogs upon the dry ground, when suddenly the man in the lead exclaimed:

"Great Heavens! what is that?"

There was, indeed, cause, and a fearful cause, for astonishment!

Upon a mound of earth lay the partially devoured body of a man. He was lying on his back. The mouldering flesh had nearly all gone, but that remaining sent out such an odor that the men could hardly overcome their disgust sufficiently to approach the body.

The sight was horrible beyond anything we had ever seen.

Men who had stood unflinchingly the carnage of battle turned away sickened from the loathsome thing. The jagged pieces of flesh barely adhering

to the bones, and the ghastly, half-eaten face, too dreadfully explained the attraction that drew the alligators to the place. An alligator never eats raw flesh; it kills its victim and lays it aside until the flesh has decayed. Then it enjoys a royal meal.

As soon as we could, we examined the body.

The right arm extending upwards, showed the hand tightly clasped. Around the left forefinger was a gold ring, and thinking it would lead to his identification, we pulled it off. As we did so, a piece of paper fell from the closed hand. Only these few words were decipherable:

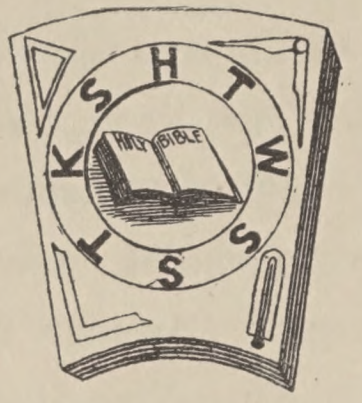
"Lost in the swamp! Oh! what a horrible death for a soldier to die! Would to—"

That was all.

In the gold ring was inscribed: "'Till death do us part!"

The fragments of his uniform proved that he had been in the Confederate service. From one of the pockets a soldier pulled a small package, bound with twine, to its top fastened a gold signet which had previously done service as a watch charm. The only inscription was the hurriedly written words:

"For my wife." The symbol upon the charm resembled the following:



Each man examined it carefully, wondering what it meant.

"I'll break it open and see what's inside," said the commanding officer, proceeding to suit the action to the word.

"For Heaven's sake, don't do that!" exclaimed the officer next in command.

"Why?"

"Because that is a Masonic emblem. This man was a Mark Mason. This seal is a 'Dead Man's Mark.' The trust it imposes is sacred. I accept it. Nobody must open this seal except the wife to whom it is addressed; I promise you that it contains nothing improper. I am bound by all the ties of Masonry to care for it, and to deliver it to the

right person, if she can anywhere be found. You will then see why I object to your breaking it."

The officer thought for awhile, and said:

"I suppose you are right. I will trust to your word."

With hearts aching with pity for the poor victim of the fatal swamp, we dug a rough grave, and honored his remains with such burial as lay within our power.

CHAPTER II.

AN IMPORTANT CAPTURE.

Shortly after sundown our exploring parties met at the demolished railroad bridge. We then went back on the tug to the place where we had left the schooners and the men.

The day's work had resulted in few developments, and even these were overshadowed by our strange discovery.

In the general opinion the man was a scout who had wandered away without keeping a record of

his path, until, at last, bewilderment and hunger overcame him.

His fate added to our own depression. We became convinced that the country in which our operations were to be based, was a perfect Pandora-box of horrors and unpleasant surprises. In this, we were by no means mistaken.

After a good sleep on the boats, we were up before sunrise next morning, ready for the expedition.

A strange scene it was at that hour.

The bird-life in the bushes and evergreen entanglements had begun to make itself heard. In the distance around the lake, the great noisy herons showed the beautiful plumage of their richly colored wings. Scaup-ducks whistled merrily through the air. The foul looking snake-birds dashed headlong into stagnant lagoons, and went through every possible gymnastic evolution, twisting themselves into a thousand ludicrous contortions, and doing everything but skinning themselves alive. Cranes, too, with their elongated necks, stalked about with as much dignity as if they were bossing every biped within a radius of a hundred miles. Birds of every hue, from the somber crow to the gaily

bedecked woodpecker and brilliantly tufted king-fisher, were on hand, singing away as if there was a rehearsal of some bird oratorio. And all the while, the rusty noses of the ever-present alligators protruded from the water to sniff the morning air, and see what the prospects were for a first-class breakfast. As the regiment progressed to the rail-road, every turn revealed some new feature of the curious life that made the swamp region so weird and disheartening.

Our path of progress was over the trestle work of the railroad.

For miles and miles through this country, the road is one continuous bridge, and our only footing was railroad ties. At first the men advanced slowly, not being used to that method of procedure; but after practice, they grew accustomed to it, and went along as well as could be expected.

The same dismal swamp encompassed us.

All along were stagnant-looking creeks and great pools of dark brown water, fringed about by fantastic jungles and vegetation of the most peculiar richness. Occasionally there were dry spots of land, upon which were congregated snakes and alligators and hideous looking reptiles that glided in and out

of their hiding places, and sunned themselves upon the decayed logs and cypress trees. The pesky moccasions seemed to abound everywhere. They nestled on tussocks, writhed among the tangled roots of trees, and some even rested upon the railroad ties, lapping their red, forked tongues as they slid back into the water upon the near approach of the soldiers.

But these were mere trifles compared with the great forests of white cypress that towered heavenwards on every side and made the region a place of gloom by their dark unwholesome foliage. Pendant from nearly every limb were immense festoons of the famous Spanish moss. Nothing could be more fantastic than the growth of this lichen. It assumes every conceivable shape. It droops like curtains, enlaces the tree branches, and tortures the dark cypresses into quaint and grotesque forms. After it has enveloped every portion of the trunk, it finishes its work by killing the tree. The appearance of miles and miles of this moss hanging from the trees, gives additional solemnity to the swamp scenery. Eccentric and whimsical in its arrangement, a thousand fanciful pictures can be traced from its wonderful draperies.

The soldiers noticed them with increasing curiosity. One pointed out a cypress that looked like a dragon. Another discovered a tree which resembled a wild buffalo. Another showed us a broad festoon of moss that bore a similarity to an unplucked bed quilt; while yet another, more classical than the rest, declared that he saw the three witches of Macbeth enlarged to the size of cypress trees, rigged out in outlandish dresses of moss, and with their leafless branches outstretched like uncanny arms, showering horrible curses upon all who came within their shadow. The atmosphere seemed to breathe the same spirit of hideousness that was seen in the landscape. Everywhere the view was ghost-like and cheerless.

The boys prodded along in silence that was seldom broken.

Less than a week before they had been as gay and light hearted as if they were departing on a holiday excursion. Now they were grave, solemn, depressed. Joyousness seemed as much out of place amid such surroundings as laughter at a funeral. The dolefulness of the swamp was as a wet blanket on all festivity. Whenever an occasional laugh broke forth, the echoes took it up and hurled it

back as if in mockery, startling the laugher back into gloom again.

Everything was suggestive of death.

The muddy depths were convenient graves, ready always for a corpse; the mosses were funeral shrouds, and the music of the trees was a prolonged dirge—like the moan of a departed spirit. The land was hung in perpetual mourning. When Dante wandered in his imaginative Inferno he might have seen something that resembled it; but even his master fancy could hardly have conjured up anything that far excels the distorted realities contained in those thousands and thousands of acres of the Louisiana swamp.

The railroad was cut here and there by bayous or channels, varying from twenty-five to fifty feet in width.

All of them were deep enough to navigate light draught vessels. Nearly everyone of the bridges formerly spanning these creeks was destroyed; but the destruction had been hurriedly done, and, while it answered all purposes to prevent a locomotive from passing over them, we were fortunate enough to be able, with the help of fallen timber, to repair the damages sufficiently for our own crossing. We

had with us two light mountain howitzers. These were dismounted, and the various sections entrusted to different parties of men, eight soldiers generally transporting each section. By distributing the burden among the command, and by a system of relief, very little inconvenience was experienced from the heavy implements of war.

We felt no fear of being flanked. The country was too impenetrable.

The command was, therefore, divided into three sections. The advance guard consisted of two strong companies of about one hundred and fifty men. Its duties were to open the march and repair as much of the road as was necessary for the safe carrying of the guns and provisions. These were in charge of the main body, composed of four hundred men, with a rear guard of one hundred picked soldiers. The immense labor involved in the march can be conceived when it is known that everything was moved by man power over a road of ties which stretched continuously to a distance of fifteen miles.

Every hour deepened the melancholy silence that settled on the men, but in spite of gloomy forebodings, they did their work like soldiers.

We had traversed between four and five miles, when we came to a sudden turn in the road. About a dozen of the men had filed out of sight in the new direction, when all at once the sharp report of a volley of musketry drove the small squad back, carrying with them one of the number, the first victim of the enemy's bullets.

The peculiar formation of the forests made the sharp volley's echo come back to us from so many points, that it seemed as if we were attacked by a whole brigade of infantry.

We saw at once that extraordinary tactics were demanded.

"Off with your cartridge belts, men," shouted the officer, "and hang them around your necks! Keep the locks of your rifles and your powder dry, and follow me."

No further order was necessary. Almost instantly into the green, dirty, nauseous swamp mud, the hundred and fifty men of the advance guard plunged.

Oh, what a terrible bath it was! Up to the waists in water, and fearful odors arising to the nostrils at every step.

The hard-packed sand bottoms of the shallow lagoons gave us our principal footing, but the roots of the trees and the tangled, swampy undergrowth tripped the men and impeded progress. But every man was in dead earnest for a fight. The Confederates had killed one of our men and wounded two others. The boys were eager to repay them for that deed.

With all our haste, we were instructed to keep well in sight of the trestle-work, lest some of us might be lost. We soon reached the bend of the road where our skirmishers had received such a warm reception.

Six or eight hundred yards away, from twenty-five to thirty men stood upon the railroad. Our first idea was to flank and capture them, and with that aim in view, our advance made a detour to head them off, to prevent their sending an alarm to their comrades, and to let them fall upon the main body.

The plan worked admirably.

In a short time they seemed perfectly bewildered to find themselves surrounded. Assured of our capture, we waited for them to throw the butts of their muskets in the air as a sign of non-resistance,

when to our great amazement, the whole party took to their heels and ran as if they were on terra firma.

At first it was most puzzling, but in a minute we saw that it indicated a new danger. We pressed forward with all possible haste, and when we reached the spot where they had stood a few seconds previously, we found a large rough platform, with a rude hut bearing the crudely painted sign

ALLIGATOR STATION.

No doubt about the alligators, but the station, what was it for?

"There's a vessel!" exclaimed one of the men.

"Where?"

"Through the trees there. Don't you see the masts?"

Sure enough, through the small opening the masts were visible. We immediately ran in that direction. We had gone scarce half of the distance when we discovered a fleet of four schooners, all loaded with cotton. The crews—the same men who had fired upon our advance—were hard at work cutting the

vessels loose from the moorings, so as to get them from our reach. But they were too late. A half-hundred muskets leveled at their heads stopped their labors. The schooners remained at the wharves.

When we reached the boats, we saw that they were flying English flags.

As we attempted to board them, the crews claimed British protection, and remonstrated at our action; but the ruse was too transparent. We put the men under arrest, and took charge of the fleet.

This capture was more valuable than at first appears.

It broke up a most important transportation service. It was evident that trains loaded with cotton were running from Jackson and Ponchatoula to Alligator Station, near which ran a navigable bayou. The cotton was reloaded on the fleet of schooners. Then the boats proceeded out of the bayou, across Lake Ponchartrain, and at night slipped out through the sound, landing the cotton at Port Louis or Mobile, whence it was shipped on blockade-runners to Europe. This was one of the main sources that supplied the South with revenue,

and for that reason our capture was one of great importance.

Indeed, it is hard to estimate its full value in dollars and cents, for it cut off a means of supply which had been the chief support of an extensive inland region.

CHAPTER III.

A WOMAN AND A WIFE.

We proceeded no further that day.

Our exploit had entitled us to rest, and our wearied forms much preferred the peace of Alligator Station to the tiresome work of skipping over railroad ties. We were hoping, too, that the train from Jackson might bring more cotton. Pickets were placed so as to make our position safe.

Our men were tired and they wanted comfort. They got as much as the disagreeable country would permit. The station platform was thronged. Bales of cotton placed on land gave many accommodation.

The officers boarded the schooners. Several of us mixed with the captured crews, intending to obtain from them all the information we could about the country, the character of the region ahead of us, and the force of Confederate soldiers in the vicinity.

But our prisoners did not seem to think such knowledge improving to the charms of our mutual converse, although they were too polite to say so directly, and delicately avoided brushing the bloom off our Northern innocence with a premature acquaintance with Southern wiles. There was none of that childlike confidence about them that one would expect to meet in the children of such a wilderness as we had struck. Between what we had discovered and what we wanted to find out, lay a yawning gulf, banked only with cotton bales, but unpleasantly suggestive of not unmixed evils in the shape of sharpshooters and alligators.

In vain our utmost ingenuity tried to bridge it. The answers to our questions were politely but indirectly made by a single fellow of evident intelligence and shrewdness of character. All the cross examining failed to draw him out. He made no point blank refusals, but by a system of ingenious evasion, he got around every question put to him.

"Who is the commander of the schooners?" was asked.

"We have no commander. But pray, gentlemen, would you like to try some of our alligator soup?"

This queston, like Hamlet's dreams, gave us pause. We had no doubt that on our arrival the commander had ceased to be, but the unexpected invitation coupled with the announcement of his non-existence rather surprised us. It sounded slightly unconnected, or if connection there was, the inference was a little too gruesome for a christian country. But the speaker interrupted harrowing reflections on the probable commander's fate, by repeating his invitation to taste their alligator soup.

"Alligator soup!" we exclaimed.

"Yes, gentlemen, alligator soup. One of our men had just made some before we heard you coming. You'll find it in one of the forward lockers. Will you permit the cook to bring it out?"

The permission was instantly granted, for we wanted to know something about it. We were not inclined from what we had seen of these unprepossessing reptiles to credit them with any tenderness, or to look upon the ugly things as sweet enough to eat. Our Northern imaginations

were not vivid enough for that. But as our bill of fare was limited, and our appetites did not match, we concluded to try the fashionable dish of the swamp.

It came, we saw, and it conquered. In fact it pleasantly surprised us. It looked the counterpart of a dish of ox-tail soup, and for the time we refused to believe otherwise.

"How do you make this stuff?" an officer inquired.

"Easy enough," replied the cook. "We ketch alligators that are young and tender and fat enough for eatin'. Then we cut their tails off and make soup out of 'em jest as we would out of anything else. We throw away all the alligator but the tail. That's the best part of him."

As an experiment we tasted it. The first sip led to a second and so on. In fact, we discovered that it was far from being a bad kind of soup. The process by which it was made soon became known, and inside the two days we remained at that place, every member of the company had Alligator Tail Soup on its bill-of-fare, and at the meals where it was served the monotony of comparing soldiers' stories was varied by discussing alligators' tails.

Our first night in the depths of a swamp which had inspired us so gloomily through the day with its horrors, was a peculiar one.

After darkness settled, the shades of the tall cypresses were more somber from the contrast they made with the cloudless sky over head. It was a place where one naturally felt afraid, where the very atmosphere seemed uncanny—the night full of creepy apprehensions of weird, unknown terrors Many of the soldiers would not even have ventured to go to sleep had not their wearied muscles demanded the refreshment that only sound slumber can give.

So weariness of body conquered uneasiness of spirit; at any rate, the boys all woke up the next morning much invigorated by the rest they had received.

It was decided to bivouac at Alligator Station a day or two longer until we obtained full information of the country. The prisoners had failed to enlighten us, and we had to depend upon our own efforts for the intelligence desired. In addition, therefore, to inspecting the track, we determined to send two men, one to the right and one to the left of the railroad, with orders to proceed through the

swamp as far as safety would permit. As usual, on duties of this kind, volunteers were called for. At once two of the bravest and most promising non-commissioned officers stepped forward. Their names were:

Corporal F. Nixon, of Company A.

Sergeant L. Gibson, of Company H.

The command prepared them well for their perilous undertaking. They were supplied with compasses, firearms and food. Stringent instructions were given them to use the wisest discretion, and keep a strict account of the distances traveled, so as not to lose themselves in the swamp.

They were ordered not to stay away later than sundown.

Both men were ambitious, and zealous to achieve success in their missions. They departed amid the cheers of their comrades. Nixon had to cross the bayou on a boat that belonged to one of the schooners. He was given Godspeed, and counseled not to let the night overtake him under any circumstances. Gibson, to all appearance, had a much better country to survey; but the departure of both men caused feelings of distrust throughout the regiment. Their fate was very uncertain.

It was a busy day with us.

Small detachments were despatched up and down the road on reconnoitering expeditions. The schooners had to be cared for, and the cotton arranged so as to prevent damage from moisture.

Our prisoners submitted gracefully to their captivity. Two of them were mainly employed through the day in giving instructions to our cooks about the proper way to make alligator tail soup. Foraging parties invaded the habitations of these animals, and captured all the young and tender ones they could. As a consequence the whole command dined on the soup made from their savory tails.

The time passed much more rapidly than we had expected. In the late afternoon the detachment sent out, began to return with vivid accounts of what they had seen. They encountered almost everything except a human being.

The last party to arrive was that sent to the east over the trestle-work yet undiscovered by us, and still an unknown world. About an hour before sundown a soldier descried them approaching. They were yet a good distance away, and indistinctly visible in the shadows of the forest. An officer looked at them through his field-glass. He studied

them intently for a moment, and then suddenly broke forth—

"By Jove, what's that?"

"What's what?" asked a brother officer standing near.

"Blast my cats, if it aint a woman!"

"A woman?"

"Yes, sir; either a woman, or a man rigged out in petticoats. Look at her! And there are some darkies! What does it mean?"

He took the glass and gazed earnestly for a few seconds.

"You're right. It's a woman. But what the devil does she want in such a place as this?"

"Wait and see."

As might be imagined, the approach of the squad awoke the liveliest interest. The question was repeated several times over, "what the devil does she want in such a place as this?" It certainly was a mystery.

As the party crossed the bridge, we saw the woman's face. It was one of undoubted strength in every feature, but with an expression of sadness. Her form was tall, erect, and her steady tread told that she had strength of muscle as well as strength

of mind. Her dress was a plain but neatly made calico, and her head covering was an ordinary bonnet. No ribbons were visible.

Three colored people—two women and a man—followed just behind her.

"Major," said the lieutenant in charge of the exploring party, advancing with his men to the platform, "I encountered this lady and her servants about three miles from here, coming westward over the trestle-work. She is in search of her husband. She begged to be conducted to you, which I consented to do."

"Oh, sir, do you know where he is?" she asked eagerly. Her calmness now changed into pleading earnestness, and the eloquence of her deep brown eyes relieved the slight harshness of her features.

"Suppose you step this way, madam," he replied. Then, after he had given orders about caring for the colored people, he proceeded with the lady and his brother officers to the cabin of the largest sloop. It was late in the afternoon, and out of doors the chilly atmosphere had made it decidedly uncomfortable. Besides this, however, an uneasy presentiment urged the officer to delay the interview. But once in the cabin, he no longer had an excuse.

"Now, madam, I will hear your story," said the commander.

"I have no story to tell," she answered. "My husband was a Confederate soldier. We lived at Ponchatoula, several miles from here. Last week he came with his command into this swamp to destroy the railroad bridges. Since then I have heard nothing from him. His company returned, but he was not among them. They said he must have been lost in the forest. I waited patiently for five days for him to come back, but he did not come. I could no longer bear the suspense, so I started out to find him with these faithful servants of mine whom I have with me. I had gone many miles when your men met me. I pleaded with them to bring me here, and at last they consented." Up to this point she had spoken clearly, and save a slight trembling in her tones, calmly. But all at once an overwhelming tide of anxiety swept away her forced composure, and she shook from head to foot as she cried almost wildly, "Where is he? You must have seen him in the swamp! For God's sake tell me where he is!"

"Had your husband anything about his person by which he could be identified?" questioned the commander.

She shrank as though he had struck her.

"Identified!" she repeated, hoarsely. "You do not mean—Oh, merciful God!"—she stopped, literally gasping for breath.

"Madam, calm yourself," said the officer, "if you wish to find your husband"—he paused, for in the face of his growing suspicions it seemed cruel to give her hope.

But she eagerly caught at his words.

"I beg your pardon—I am a little nervous—I have gone through so much anxiety," she said, pathetically, "and the word you used startled me foolishly. What did you ask me? Oh, yes; did he have anything about him. Let me see, let me see," she slowly repeated.

The officer now convinced that a harrowing disclosure was at hand, had determined to conquer himself and make it as mercifully short as he could.

While she was studying, he took from his baggage the gold ring and curiously sealed box which had been found on the decayed corpse, near Pass Man Chac.

"Had he a ring?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," she exclaimed eagerly, "a plain gold band, broad and thick."

"Had it an inscription?"

"Yes, yes,"—her face was now full of intense interest—"engraven on the inside."

"Do you remember it?"

"Perfectly. 'Til death do us part.'"

"Madam, is that the ring?" he exclaimed, extending the gold band toward her.

A second's glance, and she had snatched it and was pressing it lovingly to her lips, her face fairly beaming with happiness.

"It is, it is!" she repeated. "Oh, you have found him! Thank God! Where is he? Tell me—tell me! Let me see him."

The officers were silent. The scene was one of those dramatic climaxes in real life that stir the heart but silence the tongue. The woman's joy amounted to ecstacy. She fondled the memento with all the warmth of a wife's devotion, in an outpouring of tenderness at the happy anticipation of the coming reunion. Would it do to end her happiness by telling her the frightful truth? The blow, cruel as it appeared, must come sooner or later.

All at once their hesitation seemed to strike her She looked up at them anxiously.

"You are silent," she said. "Is my husband a prisoner? I expect it. Is he wounded—ill? I can bear even that. You asked me to identify him. Is—is he dangerously hurt—unconscious? My presence cannot harm him—I am his wife. I must—I *will* go to him!"

Still the officers said nothing.

"Why do you not answer me? Where is my husband?" With womanly institution she began to see that all was not right. "Tell me," she pleaded, "where is he? I am his wife, I tell you!" she cried passionately. "This delay is torture! What have you done to him? Why do you keep me from him? Tell me," she pleaded, "for God's sake, tell me where is my husband?"

It was pitiful to watch her struggle for composure as she breathlessly waited their answer.

There was an instant's pause, and then the commander, in a voice husky with emotion, said: "*Madam, your husband is dead.*"

The worst had come. She gazed abstractedly at the men for a minute, with a face as rigid as death itself, stunned by the might of the blow. But suddenly full consciousness came over her, and her whole being seemed convulsed with agony, while

a scream that sounded more like it had been wrenched from her than uttered, tore through her white lips that a moment more were set in merciful unconsciousness, as she fell senseless on the cabin floor.

The surgeon was called in. Restoratives were applied, but the violent shock, following upon the arduous labors she had endured, walking over many miles of ties, with nerves strained to the highest pitch by anxiety and suspense, resulted in complete prostration. The sympathy felt for her was general on both sides. The officers' cabin was given up entirely to her, and the men and surgeon were ordered to spare no trouble to insure her comfort.

Thus she passed through the first keen bitterness of her desolation and sorrow in the midst of enemies in whom she had found tender friends, carefully tended by the same hands that had honored her husband with a soldier's grave.

CHAPTER IV.

ONLY ONE RETURNS.

The sun was nearly down, and interest began to centre in the return of Nixon and Gibson.

Much solicitude was felt for them, as their time was up, and yet they did not appear. The sun went down. Still no sign of their coming. The anxiety now became general. It was increased by a sudden change in the weather.

The atmosphere grew cooler. Evidently a "Norther" was coming—a curious storm of those regions, produced by a blast from the north, driving the clouds south and meeting with the overheated atmosphere. It rarely lasts beyond three hours, but for the time the mercury runs down many degrees, and the air becomes disagreeably cold. Every one began to shiver as the chilly winds rustled among the forests. Hands were stuck in pockets, and instead of lolling under genial skies

in a pleasant temperature, the men actively bestirred themselves to keep warm.

The storm made us more anxious than ever about the safety of our two scouts.

Some believed that one night in that swamp alone meant death. Many feared the worst, while a few of the soldiers gave the men up as lost. Gloom gradually settled upon the whole camp.

But just as twilight was saying good-bye, and the darkness of night was coming in, a woe-begone bedraggled-looking creature stumbled out of the forest shades towards the railroad.

It was Gibson.

A hurrah of welcome immediately went up from a hundred throats.

But Gibson was in no humor to appreciate even the most cordial of greetings. His ashen face, when the camp-fire fell upon it, was wonderfully strange—it looked like the countenance of a walking corpse.

Food and drink somewhat restored him, but did not take away his deadly pallor.

When he could speak, he had a terrible tale of suffering to relate.

He had started out with a brave heart and determined mind. For the first two or three hours his spirits were unflagging. He made his way through the thick growth of cypress and briars as fast as possible, keeping a due record of his bearings so as not to be lost.

But the horrors of the place soon affected him.

Nameless fears kept creeping upon him in spite of the most resolute efforts to banish them; uncanny suggestions came thronging to his mind and grew ghastly with increasing terror. Everything was so gloomily silent that he felt well-nigh helpless amid the dangers that surrounded him. At one time he ran into a group of alligators, and barely escaped their hideous jaws by climbing a tree. He scared the animals by firing his revolver, but the echoes of the reports were repeated with such strangeness that he became more frightened than ever. He kept going forward, led by a sense of duty, but it seemed as if every step brought him nearer his grave; and when he turned back towards the camp he scarcely expected to reach his comrades alive. Practically, his explorations had availed nothing, as all he saw was the swamp. He was slowly

delivering his narrative, and the men were deeply interested, when he paused and abruptly asked:

"Where is Nixon?"

Ah! yes, where *was* Nixon? The others listening to Gibson, had almost forgotten his comrade. Men volunteered to search for him, but this the commander refused to allow, knowing full well that if they ventured away in the darkness, they would be lost. But guns were fired, in hope that Nixon would hear them. Vain hope! No answer came. The bed-time hour arrived. It was useless to attempt anything further till morning. Nixon was either dead, or sheltering in a tree until daybreak.

Several hours before morning, the norther disappeared, and the atmosphere became as balmy as a summer day. The night's rest had not taken away Gibson's pale and haggard looks; indeed, the daylight revealed his changed appearance so much more plainly that one of the men remarked, "I believe Gibson has stayed out in the swamp, and sent his ghost back here to the camp."

Our guest, the unfortunate lady whose name we had not yet ascertained, was much improved, thanks to the care of a good surgeon, but her grief was still intense, though more controlled. She had

excited warm sympathy among the men, and many interested inquiries were made about her condition.

But it was the fate of Nixon that disturbed our comfort.

Where could he be? Was he alive, or was he dead? These questions prompted themselves a thousand different times. The half-eaten corpse near Pass Man Chac arose to memory and suggested the calamity which might have befallen our own scout, but for a feeling we could not explain even to ourselves, we refused to believe him dead.

The early morning hours were busily occupied in organizing searching parties for Nixon. They were despatched immediately after breakfast. Other duties claimed attention, and, in fact, there was so much to do that time passed quickly, and the dinner hour with the alligator soup, came almost before we knew it.

CHAPTER V.

ROMANCE AND TRAGEDY.

The servants who had accompanied our strange visitor were kept under close guard. The two women were permitted to wait on the sick lady, but due watchfulness was observed over them.

That afternoon, the lady became much better. The flood of tears had come and gone, leaving behind them the calm and unimpassioned grief of a noble mind and affectionate heart. With returning strength came also the fortitude that naturally belonged to her character, and the quiet endurance with which she bore her heavy loss, commanded respect as much as her sorrow excited sympathy.

When the surgeon allowed her to sit up and to converse, her cabin was visited by the commander. She received him with grateful courtesy, thanking him warmly for the generous manner in which she had been treated.

"I want to ask you now," she at length said, "about my husband. You need have no fear of

overtaxing my feelings," she added quickly. "I have stood the worst, and I can now patiently hear what you have to say."

The commander told the story as simply as he could, leaving out the more horrible details, relating it, in fact, with a stricter regard for the wife's feelings than for the truth.

She listened, as she had promised, calmly and patiently—if the narrative made the quivering wound of her grief bleed afresh, she bravely repressed all outward signs of the smart.

"Will you lead me to his grave?" she asked.

"That is simply impossible, madam. It is a long distance from here, and the country is such that you could not travel through it. But there are two other things I found upon the body which I have not delivered. One is this strip of paper, and the other is this small package."

She read the fragmentary note, and despite all efforts at self-control, the tears came thick and fast. For a moment she wept silently, and then was calm.

"Oh, yes, I recognize the watch charm. It is the one that Victor used to wear. But what is the package?"

She proceeded to break it open. The commander imagined that he saw a jewel as she lifted the top of the little box; but before he could assure himself, she snatched it up hurriedly and turned pale as she placed it in her pocket, remarking as she did so, "Oh, yes; it's one of our family"—and she stopped.

Neither her hasty concealment of the package nor her agitation at sight of it, escaped the officer's keen eye, though he took no apparent notice of the incident.

"Madam," he said, courteously, "It is customary to ask strangers visiting our camp to give an account of themselves. As yet, I have not in your case complied with the custom, but if you feel able to tell it, I would very much like to hear the story of your life."

She was quiet for a minute or two, evidently undecided what to do. Presently she said:

"You have treated me so kindly that I cannot well refuse, but I assure you that it is not altogether to my own desire. My name is Madelaine Lecour. My husband was Victor Lecour. Perhaps a part of my life has been a romance—it seems more like a dreadful tragedy. Over twenty-five years ago, I was born at our plantation on the Mis-

sissippi. There all my early life was spent. My parents were wealthy, and our home was surrounded by every comfort. Oh, how happy it seems, looking back at it from this awful place! Among the visitors to our house was Victor Lecour The story of our love is too uneventful to interest stranger ears. But it was full of the sweetest, strangest experiences to us. We lived only for each other, and in a world where everything was wonderful, and every hour a year of commonplace existence. To others it was merely an ordinary love-affair, remarkable only for the smoothness of its course. Soon after our engagement we were married. We were so happy there on the plantation until this terrible war came, and then he was ordered with his regiment to Ponchatoula. They allowed him hardly time enough to bid his wife good-bye before he was off."

She paused, and for several minutes stared vacantly out of the cabin.

"A few months afterwards," she continued, "Farragut and his fleet entered the Mississippi. You know the result far better than I can tell it to you. Fort St. Philip and Fort Jackson fell into his hands, and then those fearful war boats came up

on the river. Our home was a large plantation dwelling near the levee. We could hear the mighty rumbling of the guns and the noise, and, oh, how fearfully it frightened us! That night in April we had all gathered in the sitting-room—my parents, my young brother and my little sister. My older brother and two cousins were out of doors. By and bye, we heard the approach of one of the boats. We went to the window to see it pass. Just as it was opposite our plantation, my brother and cousins fired their guns at it. It was a crazy thing for them to do, and they did it without for the moment imagining what would follow. But no sooner had the reports of their guns died away, than the men began to fire the cannons from the ship. Great volleys of murderous shot hit our house, and soon it lay in complete ruins. Shall I ever forget that?"

She paused—her eyes filled and her lips quivered, but she resolutely checked the tears that were beginning to flow at the memory of her happy home.

"It was as if death itself had visited us. All the family except myself were killed. My escape was almost miraculous, but for the time I wished I were dead along with my parents. Most of the slaves

were also shot down. The destruction by the guns was well-nigh complete. I know that the fault of the firing belonged to my injudicious brother, but why did the soldiers visit it upon us so cruelly? Why should they want to destroy a household for an act of folly? Why are we doomed to this war of bloodshed and murder? But I'm wandering from my subject," she added with instant recovery of her self-control. "After the calamity at our home—or rather our former home—I was heartbroken, and for several days yielded with scarce a struggle to despair, but these three slaves—whom you found with me, and who were the only ones that escaped death at our home—cheered me, and promised to be always faithful and obedient. You don't know how grateful I am to them—they have been so kind to me in every misfortune. Well, I determined to go to Ponchatoula and find my husband. That was the only thing left for me to do after we had buried the bodies of those killed at the plantation. Ah, what a terrible funeral that was! (Never mind those tears. They will go away presently.) After the sad ordeal, I started on the journey. These servants were my only escort. How we got to our destination, Heaven only knows! Our journey was

a series of hardships, but we persevered until we accomplished it. I can't begin to tell you the horrors of a woman's camping in these swamps, or of the terrible things we endured on our way. The black man, Tom, did everything that human being could do to carry us safely through, and he at last succeeded. When we got to Ponchatoula, my husband was there, and you may be sure our meeting was a happy one. Our resources were slender, and our living was consequently simple. He was stationed at Ponchatoula for several months, and then two weeks ago, he was ordered with his company to come down in the dreadful swamp and demolish the railroad bridges. When I parted with him then, I had, somehow, a presentiment that I would never see him again, but little I believed that it would ever come true. In a few days, his regiment returned but he was not with it. They said he had wandered off into the swamp, and had probably been lost. But they told me he would be sure to make his way to the cotton schooners at Alligator Station. I waited and waited for tidings of him. He was all that I had left, and you can guess how devotedly I was attached to him. With every other object of affection torn from me, all the

love of my nature centered in him. At last, I could bear the suspense no longer. I was crazed. I took my servants here, and started into the swamp. I did not heed its horrors this time—I was going to my husband—God help me! I thought so! You know the rest of the story. It is all I have to tell."

She stopped speaking and turned sadly away. The officer, much affected by her narrative, was silent for several minutes. Then he spoke.

"About the future. Have you any plans?"

"None whatever," she replied. "I have now lost all dear to me in this world. But I suppose I must make my way back to Ponchatoula."

"Not in your present condition. The journey would kill you. You had better remain in our camp here until something fortunate happens. You are welcome to the best we have. And I hope," he added, rising, "you will not think of going away until you become stronger."

She thanked him again warmly for his kindness, and he took his leave. As he jumped off the boat to walk up to the station, he muttered to himself:

"I wonder what's in that small box? Why did she try to hide it, and afterwards say nothing about it in her story? She's a very clever woman—a very clever woman."

CAAPTER VI.

NIXON.

The fate of Nixon remained a sealed book.

The exploring parties found no trace of him. The guns fired during the day received no answers. Our main hope, however, lay in five picked men who had been sent to follow his trail and find him if they could.

Late in the afternoon the others had all come back from searches barren of results. No Confederates had been seen, and the country was the same dismal region wherever they went.

Having reported their profitless journeys, they were grouped on the station platform, when the anxiously-expected party of five were seen on the other side of the bayou, two of the men carrying a limp-looking bundle. Their waiting comrades fairly held their breath in the mingled suspense of hope and fear. All at once the men cheered.

"There's Nixon. There's Nixon!"

The small boats were soon shoved to the other shore, and the party were brought over to the crowds that had collected on the banks prepared to give them a welcome as warm as hearts could make it.

But Nixon!

What an awful sight he was! He looked like a mere specter. His cheeks were sunken and cadaverous; his lips were tightly closed as if in anger or remorse; his eyes bulged, and madly stared in one direction; his face was the picture of a horrible fear, which transfixed him, and give his features a pallor that seemed to have come from the lower world.

"Hello, Nixon! Hello, old boy!" his comrades shouted.

But he gazed at them vacantly without showing the least sign of intelligence.

The spectacle moved every man who witnessed it.

He was placed at once in charge of the surgeon, who had him carried to one of the schooners.

Then the searchers detailed the way in which they had found the missing man.

After a diligent search all the morning, near midday they discovered boot tracks around a large branching tree, from under which a hungry-looking

crowd of alligators fled at their approach. The men saw that the bark of the tree had been rubbed away as if from climbing, and closer investigation showed in one of the crotches part of a soldier's uniform. Every man's heart went out in the glad cheer that greeted the welcome sight, although many a cheek turned pale at the thought of the horrid feast they had barely prevented.

To climb the tree was the work of a moment. The climber approached the uniform—it was indeed Nixon crouching there.

"Come along, old boy; get out of this," shouted the rescuer, but to his amazement, Nixon gave a scream, and shrunk from him as if he had been a devil.

It was by hard work only that they got him down—for he did not recognize a single man, and tried to get out of their grasp. They took him in their arms and brought him back to the camp as fast as they could.

It was a source of much congratulation that the lost had been found, but the circumstances saddened all our joy.

Nixon's condition gave his comrades keen anxiety, especially as they could not know for some time

how far his reason had been unsettled by his experiences in the swamp. Careful nursing was the prime requisite for his recovery, and this was unexpectedly supplied. To the great relief of the surgeons, Mrs. Lecour, on hearing of his condition, generously offered her services, and they were promptly and eagerly accepted. We felt a quiet satisfaction, therefore, in knowing that our sick comrade was in good hands.

Now that the last scout had been found, we determined to press forward on our explorations. It was decided to leave a large guard of men at Alligator Station, to care for the schooners, and keep charge of the prisoners and sick men.

At first, we were undecided what to do with Mrs. Lecour and her servants; whether to take them with us, or leave them at the station.

The latter course was preferred, since, in case of an engagement, they would be undesirable burdens on our hands.

This plan was communicated to the lady.

At first, she strenously objected, but the dangers being pointed out, she consented to remain, promising to do all in her power to nurse our sick men and poor Nixon into good health.

CHAPTER VII.

SURPRISERS SURPRISED.

It was New Year's Day, 1863, when we left Alligator Station for Ponchatoula.

Everything had been prepared, and by sunrise we were off, marching as usual over the railroad. By noon that day we began to notice a great change in the formation of the forests. The water was more shallow, and here and there dry spots, with different kinds of trees, indicated that we were approaching the main land.

Sure enough, two hours later we were in a country fully twenty-five or fifty feet above the level of the swamp. In the open fields we made a different arrangement in our line of march, and lines of skirmishers and flankers were formed.

As yet, we knew nothing of the region into which we were penetrating.

Several decrepid contrabands were captured, but they persistently refused to give us any information.

To see a man anywhere was an extraordinary sight. I afterwards learned that all the able-bodied colored men had been sent to Port Hudson, to work on the fortifications. Our secret service being unable to do anything, we determined to proceed with great care, being first satisfied that our advance was cautious and reliable.

We felt sure that there was not a large force of Confederates in the vicinity; otherwise, we could not have issued from the swamp without resistance.

We went forward, therefore, with small expectations of danger.

In view of the fact that we were approaching a defenceless village, orders were given the men to use great prudence, and not to fire on the unarmed and unprotected women and children.

The regiment moved along in close column, with a company opening the march.

Suddenly every one of the men in the advance came to a halt as if there was danger ahead. They looked before them with an earnest gaze which soon brought the other men to the place.

Not one of us will ever forget that sight.

On leaving the swamp we had carefully avoided the railroad track, yet keeping within easy reach

of it, since it was the only guide we had of the region. We had been ascending gradually since we left the low lands, until we came to the place where the men had halted.

Right there was a sudden declivity overlooking a beautiful meadow, and commanding an extensive view over the country. But the chief attraction lay about a thousand yards away.

Under a grove of large oak trees, was a throng of women and children engaged in the festivities of New Year's day. It was the village fete of the Ponchatoula people. A gay scene it made, with the swings, the games, the bright dresses and the happy faces—a contrast almost startling in its suddenness to the dismal swamp and the sad scenes we had left behind us. The day was an ideal one, and the pic-nickers seemed in full enjoyment of the pleasures surrounding them.

We were concealed by the growth of foliage, and the people had no warning of our approach. With the aid of a glass, we felt almost at the side of the merry-makers. And the strangest part of it all was that we saw not a single uniformed man in the whole throng, which consisted altogether of women

and children, with a few youths and old men—in all numbering between two and three hundred.

It was a pity to interrupt such a scene, but orders are orders, and on to Ponchatoula we had to go.

A short appeal to the men sufficed to remind them of their mothers, sisters and sweethearts, and to take the ill-feelings of war from their hearts. It was determined that the load should be withdrawn from every gun, so that not a drop of innocent blood should be spilt. Then one-half the regiment was ordered to cross the meadow at double-step, with their muskets on the right shoulder, as in parade. The rest of the command was to regain the railroad track, and by swiftly advancing, to descend upon the merry-makers.

The plan worked admirably.

And now occurred a comical mistake. Our brilliant Zouave uniform was well known to them as that of one of their favorite regiments, "The Louisiana Tigers." They saw the men coming, and cheered royally at their approach, thinking they were Southern troops. As onward the soldiers went, more enthusiastic became the reception. The people stopped their frolicking to welcome the boys.

Handkerchiefs were waved in the air, huzzas went up, and everybody showed his or her gladness to see the regiment, At first, our boys did not know what to make of it. Southerners cheering Northerners! It seemed impossible. But they soon saw the meaning, so determined to embrace the opportunity and have some fun.

They lost no time in mingling with the crowd, and soon were chatting with the sweet village belles, gayly enjoying what was to them a transformation scene as compared with the terrible experiences of Alligator Swamp. The fair maidens did their best with shy words and speaking orbs to assist the gallant warriors to throw off that timid reserve which is so striking a characteristic of soldier lads in the presence of pretty lassies. And the boys nobly responded. They had not expected to meet such a body of Confederates as this, but though totally unprepared, they were equal to the emergency. To be "shot at with fair eyes" instead of being "a mark for smoky muskets," was an agreeable change, to put it mildly, in the usual program of war, and so they faced this fire from fair Southern eyes without a tremor. They even started, without waiting for orders, to return it,

which they did with such undaunted courage, that the battery of killing glances they brought to bear, did considerable execution in the enemy's ranks. After some preliminary skirmishing on both sides, the fighting began to be at rather close quarters, rapidly nearing a hand-to-hand encounter.

We certainly enjoyed our novel experience. Starting as Zouaves, we had been cheered into Tigers, and now from Tigers, we were in a fair way to be turned into lions.

Strange to say, the people mistrusted nothing. The Louisiana Tigers were strangers to them, and we could pass for Tigers as well as Zouaves.

In the midst of the general sociability and hilarity, the second wing made its appearance, and as the villagers turned towards them to welcome more Tigers, the first object that greeted their astounded gaze was the Stars and Stripes floating gracefully in that gentle New Year's breeze.

There was an instant's dumb dismay, then yells and screams arose from the panic-stricken women and children at sight of the feared and detested flag. The general astonishment knew no bounds, and for the time the people were rushing back and forth like so many wild beings. We tried to calm

them; they refused to be conciliated. The fair damsels who had found us so fascinating when they fancied us Louisiana Tigers, suddenly discovered that we had lost all our attractions as Northern Zouaves, and angrily repulsed all our well meant efforts at conciliation. Woman-like, they gave us the credit of their own mistake, and then proceeded to visit it upon us. Anger had succeeded to dismay, and we received the full benefit of the change. We did not relish it. True, we were soldiers ready to die for the flag now floating above us, but we were also men, and under no circumstances does a man enjoy coming down from a pedestal where he has been posing a martial hero to susceptible young hearts, surrounded by the flattering incense of female adoration. Still we were not discouraged, but renewed our endeavors to allay the bitterness the discovery of our true colors had excited. After awhile, however, their judgment began to act.

They recognized the fact that they were now in our hands—that the safety of their homes depended upon cool, wise and submissive action. As for ourselves, we treated them with all the kindness and consideration that lay in our power, and to our delight, the anger and surprise moderated. They

became much more pleasant to our men, and showed that they could in a manner be generous and hospitable even under all the disadvantages of captivity although there was no disposition to renew the friendliness of our first meeting.

From the picnic grounds, our regiment went in with the people to Ponchatoula, about a mile and a half distant.

We found it a pretty little village, nicely laid out, with neatly kept streets. The houses were well constructed, and there were several public buildings of pretentious size, which would have done credit to a larger town.

We at once took possession of the place. The few young men were placed under arrest. During the night our pickets were stationed on every side, so as to throw complete protection around the camp. In vain were attempts made to gain some information of the country about us. Every man and many women were closely questioned, but their replies did no good. We had, therefore, to find out everything for ourselves.

The people, of course, were too much put out about their capture to give Yankee soldiers entertainment; but our boys managed to have a good

time despite the fact that the few festivities were of their own making.

The atmosphere, so very different from the dismal swamp air, was of itself an invigoration. The change in a single day from lagoons and prison-like barriers of great cypress trees, to dry land with its people and its civilization, brought also a change in the men. But, with all their merriment, there was no indignity perpetrated; no outrage upon private property; no unnecessary intrusion upon homes and dwellings.

We captured the place without firing a single shot—we possessed it without resorting to the unpleasant measures which are so often used by the conqueror over the conquered.

CHAPTER VIII.

WE RETURN TO ALLIGATOR STATION.

Our sources of information failing in results, we determined the next morning to send a strong reconnoissance out on a hand car towards Jackson, with orders to proceed until it came across Confederate soldiers.

The men had not been gone over an hour, before they came back in great haste, reporting that trains were slowly approaching Ponchatoula. Our men began to look for a little excitement from the boys in gray. Preparations were immediately made to meet them.

Our instructions had been very explicit not to participate in an active engagement. For this reason a squad of our best men was sent forward with orders to draw out the whole force of the enemy, but to fall back on their approach. This plan was followed in order to get an exact estimate

of the force. To guard our own position securely, and to anticipate any move that might be made for a pitched engagement, we decided to evacuate the town and test the strength of the Confederates between Ponchatoula and the swamp. By this policy we felt perfectly safe against being cut off by a flank movement.

Accordingly we fell back.

Sure enough, it was not long before the enemy began approaching. Our reconnoissance had acted as directed, and had gradually drawn the Confederates on to Ponchatoula. Our movements were cautious. By careful manœuvering, we soon made the enemy deploy its whole strength, which developed between twelve and fifteen hundred men, under the command of an officer whose name I understood to be Jeff Thompson.

Manifestly in our position, it was useless to attempt fighting them.

We, therefore, concluded to regain the swamp, knowing that on the trestle-work our flanks would be fully protected. Our orders had been carried out in determining the forces; now it remained for us to quickly withdraw and take a safe refuge in the swamp.

But judge of our feelings as we struck towards the woods, to find ourselves flanked by an Indian regiment belonging to the Confederate forces. Acquainted with the country and accustomed to marching through the swampy regions, they had made a wide detour through the woods, and cut off our retreat the very moment we least expected it.

Here, forsooth, was a plenty of fighting!

It began almost instantly. It was murderous and bitter.

The Indians fought as Indians always do. Hiding behind trees, clumps of bushes and mounds of earth, they poured the deadly fire of their rifles among our men without mercy and with no cessation.

The soldier shooting in front, was likely to be pierced by a bullet from behind.

It was a battle of life and death, and our men went to work inspired by that dreadful truth.

Several of the boys fell from the first fire. These we could not leave to die and rot alone in such a place; so we decided to cover our retreat and carry our dead and wounded with us. This, of course, greatly impeded our progress, and made our position more dangerous, since the Indians continued shoot-

ing from their ambushes. Some of the men returned the fire, while the others dragged their unfortunate comrades over the ties to get them beyond the enemy's reach.

For three hours the combat, or rather murder, lasted.

Then, and not until then, did the Indians stop.

The swamp had become too dense, and they were compelled to withdraw, but not before they had killed twenty-two of our men and left us with forty-odd more wounded. These we transported as carefully as the railroad ties would permit.

Couriers were despatched to Alligator Station with orders to have the schooners converted into temporary hospitals.

We followed as rapidly as we could, reaching our destination that afternoon. The guard had made every possible preparation for our injured men, finding the cotton of excellent service in supplying comfortable resting places. The cabins had been vacated for the benefit of the sufferers, and there was a general and earnest effort to aid them in every way. The burial of our dead in the dry mounds of earth was a duty performed amidst much sadness and many tears.

But how about Nixon? Had he improved?

That was our first eager question when the excitement of our disastrous retreat began to subside, and allow us to think of other things.

He had improved, and improved wonderfully. Mrs. Lecour's ministrations were evidently successful.

It was true that he still was pale and emaciated, and that his mind was often wandering and his voice weak; but there was a brighter light in his eyes, and his conversation showed his illness had not impaired the old-time good nature that had made him such a favorite with his comrades.

We soon learned how carefully, diligently and devotedly Mrs. Lecour had nursed him; what excellent superintendence she had exercised over him, and how gratefully appreciative he seemed to be for all her attentions.

"She's better than a dozen doctors," said our surgeon.

Presently it began to dawn on us that Nixon's appreciation of his nurse was warmer than even the strictest gratitude could exact. When she was present, he had eyes for no one else; when she spoke to him, he fairly hung upon her words. He

was as submissive as a child to her directions, but evidently obeyed them more to please her than for the sake of their good effect upon his health. His eyes softened as they turned upon her, and when at intervals, his mind seemed to wander, the sound of her voice instantly recalled him to himself.

After studying these symptoms for awhile, one of the men made a bold diagnosis of the case.

"Blast me, if I don't believe Nixon is in love!" he announced as the result. Indeed, there seemed to be a more or less clearly defined impression that something of a romance was going on not a thousand miles from Alligator Station. The surgeon was glad to hear it, "because," said he, taking a strictly professional view of these tender developments, "Nixon will get well all the quicker by taking a little dose of that sort of thing."

All the world loves a lover; interest in the tender passion springs eternal in the human breast; so it was not wonderful that neither war, battles nor sieges, surprises, retreats nor savage red-skins, could altogether banish the sentiment that is as old as human nature, and almost as strong. Despite our thrilling experiences, not a man of us but felt it leap to life at the hint of a romance among

our midst; and Nixon acquired a new interest in our eyes as the lover of Madeleine Lecour.

As for herself, though ordinarily quickly comes such knowledge to a woman, a still absorbing grief for her husband had evidently prevented her from discovering poor Nixon's secret; still less, that it was already the common property of his comrades. As her patient, the man whom she had nursed back to health of mind and body, she took a deep and tender interest in him—that was plain to all; but whether her heart was yet responsive to the touch of love, or was buried in the lonely grave of Victor Lecour, formed a matter of serious conjecture to us. It seemed as if fate had led her directly to the swamp to save Nixon; perhaps, then, suggested the most sentimentally inclined among us, Nixon was destined to heal the wounds of her heart in return.

We bivouacked at that place several days longer.

The result of our labors had been dispatched to the headquarters at New Orleans. In two days orders came for us to return to the Cresent City. They reached us late in the afternoon, and we determined to proceed the next morning.

That day, Nixon became himself again.

His mind was clear, and he conversed intelligently and rationally. In the evening the commander visited his cabin, and shortly after, Mrs. Lecour, who had been out among the wounded men doing all she could to alleviate their sufferings, came in and gave the sick man some medicine, ordering him as she did so, not to talk too much nor to exert himself in any way.

She was untiring in her attentions, and Nixon's eyes followed her every motion with a mingled devotion and pleasure.

As she offered to take his empty glass, he raised her hand and pressed it gratefully to his lips. "This lady," he said to the commander, "has been like an angel to me in my calamity."

At the intensity of feeling expressed in his tone more than his words, Mrs. Lecour blushed like a girl. "You cannot imagine," he continued, "how deeply grateful I am for her kindness. It could not have been more generous and sacrificing."

"You owe me no gratitude," quickly responded Mrs. Lecour. "If my services have been of use to you, I have but repaid my own debt."

"You saved my life!" exclaimed Nixon; "more than my life—my mind! Owe you no gratitude! I can never be grateful enough. You have saved

me from the most horrible of fates. I will never forget it while a spark of the life I owe entirely to your care, remains."

He paused, exhausted by the strength of his own emotion, but certainly no one who saw his earnestness, could doubt that his gratitude was not only sincere but overwhelming.

Mrs. Lecour seemed too surprised at Nixon's unusual energy to reply immediately, and the commander seized the opportunity to say, "I have come to tell you that we start for New Orleans to-morrow morning."

"And what shall I do?" exclaimed Mrs. Lecour.

Nixon half started up, then restraining himself, turned eagerly to hear the commander's reply.

"That depends upon yourself," said the latter, "but I think it would be best for you to accompany us. In the city, you will doubtless meet some of your friends."

She stood in deep thought for a moment, while Nixon watched her in silent anxiety. Then she said, "I suppose it is for the best. I am alone in the world."

Her eyes filled with tears, but Nixon turned away his head to hide the sudden light in his own.

CHAPTER IX.

A PARTING AND A PROMISE.

The next morning a squad of sailors, detailed from Farragut's forces, arrived and took charge of the cotton schooners.

Our course lay exactly as we had entered the swamp, compelling us to retrace our steps to Pass Man Chac. This necessitated more tiresome trestle-work travel, and as we had to transport our wounded in addition to our guns, progress was the more laborious.

In arranging comfortable transportation for the injured men, Mrs. Lecour was especially effective.

She made herself useful on all sides. She gave directions for carrying the sufferers, fixed them on the ambulances and stretchers, and invented every little convenience possible. Her suggestions and orders were obeyed implicitly, and in a short time the boys looked upon her as the Commander of the "Crippled Corps."

The admiration for her indomitable perseverance and invaluable assistance was universal. No praise was too great for her.

Nixon looked on it all with increasing satisfaction, but he was happiest when she came to his side and arranged him for the journey.

It was while talking to and cheering him as best she could, that the order was given to advance. She walked near him the whole distance, as if she instinctively knew that her presence would give him strength to stand the dreary travel. Transportation was offered her by the warm-hearted soldiers, but she rejected it.

"No, I will walk," she said; "and when I am tired, I will let you know."

The incidents of the trip were few, and developed nothing unusual in any way. Thanks to Mrs. Lecour, our wounded gave us less trouble than we expected. We crossed Lake Ponchartrain in schooners drawn by the same slow tug, camped on the western banks at night, and arrived the next day in New Orleans.

The endurance of Mrs. Lecour during the whole journey was simply wonderful.

When asked how she could stand such a strain, she replied that it was because her youthful days had been mainly spent in outdoor exercise. The vigor of her constitution had never departed.

We were too much interested in Mrs. Lecour to lose sight of her entirely, and so on parting with her, we claimed a right to know something of her future movements.

She sought in vain to find her friends in the city—they had all disappeared. Failing in that, she looked for employment by which she could support herself, but here, too, she was disappointed. Her position was, indeed, a disheartening one, and would have driven almost any other woman to desperation. Bereft at once of husband, home and friends, without support or the means of obtaining it, her prospects could hardly have been darker, but she was too brave and self-reliant to give up the struggle and resign herself to helpless despair.

Our regiment—the One Hundred and Sixty-fifth New York—had been ordered to take possession of Camp Parapet—the deserted earth-works of the Confederates. This move was made because we expected an invasion of that region by the Confederates at no distant date. We were

about ready to depart from the city. Our wounded had been cared for in the hospitals.

Our last night in New Orleans had come.

The boys resolved to celebrate it royally. Dark days were dawning for some of us—we would be merry while we could. So in fun and frolic passed the last hours of our stay in the Crescent City.

About nine o'clock, in the midst of songs and reminiscences and merry-making, Mrs. Lecour suddenly appeared in the camp. All who saw her rose instantly to their feet, and standing with uncovered heads, greeted her visit as an honor. The spontaneous tribute moved her deeply. She gratefully acknowledged it, and then asked to see the commander, who, informed at once of her presence, hastened to extend her a warm welcome to the camp.

"I came to ask a service of you," she said, after the formal greetings.

"I shall be most happy to perform it if it is within my power," he replied.

"I think you can do it without any trouble. It is this: I have failed to find either relatives or friends. I have failed to find even work. There seems to be nothing which I can do to earn my

living, because I am inexperienced in manual labor. I have now decided to become a nurse in your hospital. I am much interested in the wounded men, and perhaps I can be of some little help to them in their sufferings. Will there be any difficulty in my getting a place?"

"None whatever, madam. But you have, if I mistake not, three servants—slaves, I believe you call them."

"No, sir, you are mistaken. As far as I am concerned, the three colored people are as free as any man in your regiment. I have relinquished all claims upon them."

"Then that answers what I was going to say. If you have decided on hospital work, I shall not try to persuade you out of it, for I know full well how grateful those poor fellows will be for your services."

She gave a sigh of mingled pleasure and relief. It was easy to see that her energetic spirit grew almost cheerful at the prospect of work.

"When shall I begin?"

"Whenever you choose. I will go to the hospital with you in the morning, if you wish it, and will introduce you to our surgeon general."

She thanked him and withdrew.

The next morning he accompanied her to the hospital. She was placed in the ward occupied by the men who had been wounded in the Dismal Swamp. Their satisfaction at being again under the care of their tender nurse of the swamp, showed itself in the joyful welcome they gave her.

But if all were pleased with the prospect of having her still with them, Nixon's joy was beyond measure. He said little after his first glad greeting, but he watched her jealously as she went from bed to bed, soothing pain with her gentle touch, and listening to expressions of pleasure at her presence that touchingly proved to her how sincerely her work among them had been appreciated.

Our regiment that afternoon left for Fort Parapet.

It was the last we ever saw of Mrs. Lecour. The balance of the story comes to me through other persons. I am no longer an eye-witness.

Nixon remained in New Orleans for several weeks.

There is no doubt that he would have stayed longer, had his inclination been consulted, to enjoy the benefit of Mrs. Lecour's nursing; but to allow a well man in the hospital just because he liked

to gaze upon one of the nurses, was not exactly conducive to the spirit of military discipline, nor did wounds of the heart, no matter how severe, exempt a man from military duty in those unromantic times.

But apparently the romance commenced in the Dismal Swamp, had prospered in the hospital, where in the constant association of nurse with patient, Mrs. Lecour had evidently learned to love the man to whom womanly pity—and we all know to what feeling a woman's pity is akin—had first drawn her; her own utter loneliness and the manly earnestness of Nixon's love, had once more led her to taste the sweetest draught of life and find it good.

Certain it is that Nixon was very much in love with Mrs. Lecour; and that he had won her affection in return, there seemed little doubt.

When he was ordered back to his regiment, they said the parting was a very sorrowful one.

Nixon joined us at Camp Parapet, amid the universal greetings of the boys.

They were sincerely glad to see him with them again.

To one of the officers in whom he often confided, he told the story of his stay in the hospital. He

confessed his ardent attachment to Mrs. Lecour, "and what is more," said he, "we have mutually promised to meet each other in New Orleans one year from to-day."

"That was a rash promise. How long do you suppose this war will last."

"Oh, it will be ended in a year; and if it isn't, I can write to New Orleans and explain why I could not get there at the time appointed. But I must keep the promise. I have a memento to return to her. She gave it to me with a positive request not to let it depart from my hands until I gave it back to her, and this memento I will keep as sacred as her love."

Just what the memento was he did not venture to say, but a few days afterwards a package dropped from his vest pocket, and an officer who chanced to see it, declared that on it was fastened the identical seal found on the dead body at Pass Man Chac.

Poor Nixon! He was radiant with his new found happiness, and no gloomy forebodings came to mar his dreams of bliss, though on the heart that beat constantly with thoughts of love, rested always the fatal pledge.

CHAPTER X.

THE END.

Before the year was over, our regiment was ordered North.

We left the fair skies of the South, and proceeded to Virginia. There in the Shenandoah Valley, we assisted Sheridan in his glorious campaign.

The year passed, but (now Captain) Nixon could neither send a message to New Orleans, nor go himself. Again and again he tried, with desperate anxiety, to keep his tryst; again and again he failed. The war closed, and still his promise had not been fulfilled in any way. He stuck to his company to the last. When it disbanded, he received the pay that was due him, and now no longer fettered by a soldier's duty, he started with a lover's haste, straight to New Orleans.

It was with a heart full of love and hope that he entered the city at last—a heart utterly unpre-

pared for the blow that awaited him. The meeting on which he had fed during the long, weary months of separation—the meeting whose thoughts were ever with him through days of battle and nights of suffering—this meeting was not to be. Whether his love had doubted his truth, or whether she was dead, he knew not. He had lost her—all the rest was dreadful uncertainty.

For months he searched the city, trying to find her, questioning people whom he met, looking through the newspapers, and snatching at every shadow of information that promised success. All his efforts were vain. He felt that his search was hopeless, but he fought desperately against the growing conviction that he had indeed lost her. He hoped against hope, and resolutely shut his eyes to the truth.

But a day came when he could hope no longer, and heartsick and despondent, he retired to his quarters on Carondelet Street, and there gave himself up to a life of gloomy seclusion. Every day he roamed aimlessly about the streets, restless and unhappy.

One bright afternoon, as he was approaching one of the hospitals, several Sisters of Charity walked

out of the entrance and down the steps. As Captain Nixon came nearer, he glanced casually at them, and was about to pass when his gaze fell upon the faces of the last two Sisters.

Instantly he paused, unable to speak or move. There before him was the face he had sought so long and vainly—that waking or sleeping was always with him—that he had so yearned to look upon—the face of the woman he loved.

The harshness produced by sorrow and suffering had disappeared from her features, and in the simple dress of her order, her face was full of sweet, attractive loveliness.

She came nearer—still he could not move. Her eyes were cast down; she did not see him; in another moment she would be past.

"Madeleine!" he gasped.

She turned with a startled look and their eyes met. The recognition was instant. She grew deadly pale, and he who knew her face so well, read in it a short, sharp struggle. But almost at once she regained her self-control, and walked on with her companions.

Nixon stood rooted to the spot by the shock of the meeting. He had found her at last only to

know she was irrevocably lost to him—more than lost to him, for the knowledge that she was living, and he could not see her, seemed to him worse than if she were dead.

Before this discovery, he had, at least, the memory of their mutual love to cherish; now he must give up even that; in the sacred and self-denying life of the Sister of Charity there was no room for the things of earth. Gradually he learned to submit to the inevitable, but every day he walked by the hospital, hoping to catch a glimpse of her. He felt that he no longer had a right to the memento she had given him in the days of their love, and so sought to return it, but the priest to whom he referred the matter, reported that Mrs. Lecour, or rather Sister Valencia, preferred that he should keep it in his possession. How devotedly he cherished it no one can say.

His figure soon became a familiar one on the street.

He took his walk by the hospital unfailingly. He spoke to neither man nor woman, but occasionally he stopped to pat a child on the head or to say a few words to the little ones. Notwithstanding his age, he seemed an old man. His hair had

become gray, his step was uncertain, and every week seemed to add a month of age upon his shoulders, which already drooped.

No one could have recognized in the prematurely aged man, with no apparent object or interest in life, the brave soldier, the hearty comrade, the ardent lover, of a few short years before. All that was over now, and with it his hopes, his ambitions, and the sweetness of life.

Several years after—about 1873—the papers chronicled the death of Sister Valencia, and in doing so, gave a short sketch of her life. This paper fell into Captain Nixon's hands. He saw that Mrs. Lecour had not left the world for an existence of charity and devotion to the unfortunate, until two years after the time appointed for their meeting in New Orleans. She had waited for him, then, and this added doubly to his grief. She must have thought him dead—he would not for a moment think that she could have believed him false. And so sadly ended the romance begun in the inauspicious depths of the Dismal Swamp.

On the day of the dead sister's burial, an old man left a beautiful design of flowers at the hospital door to be placed over the grave.

He gave no name.

But more than one asked what led the "old hermit"—for by that name was Nixon known--to do such a thing. None knew the story of his life, but it was supposed that the dead sister had been kind to him in some sickness, and that he had sent this token as an expression of his gratitude.

Two years passed.

For a week the hermit had been missed, and the policeman who daily passed his quarters, became anxious as the days went by, and he did not appear. The lonely man who seldom spoke and never smiled, had still inspired an interest in all around him in spite of his reserve, and so when the officer knocked at his door to ask if he were ill, and received no answer, he forced the door at once, fearing the worst.

There before his eyes lay the body of the old man.

He had evidently been dead several days. He had died as he had lived, alone, and with him died the secret of his fate and of the trust he had faithfully guarded to his last breath.

The coroner was notified and a jury of inquest summoned. They went to the room and found

the body lying on the floor, as if it had fallen from a chair near by, thus indicating that the end was sudden.

But the most surprising thing in the meagerly furnished apartment was a strongly made and peculiarly constructed coffin, near the outstretched body.

On being examined, the lid proved to be self-fastening, so that a person could have placed himself in the casket, pulled the cover down and forever remained safe from intrusion.

This strange coffin had evidently been made for a purpose. It was carefully examined to discover, if possible, the clue to its mysterious presence in the old hermit's room.

"What is this?" suddenly cried one of the jurymen.

At the head of the lid was a gold eagle's claw. In its clutches it held a diamond of wonderful brilliancy. It was fully as large as that known as the "Duke of Brunswick," and of such clearness that its value amounted to thousands and thousands of dollars. When breathed upon, it turned a beautiful blue. Its purity was without a flaw, and its lustre was marvelous.

How came it in his possession?

The question was asked and theories were offered, but no satisfactory explanation was forthcoming.

A verdict of death from natural causes was rendered. But the great point of interest was the jewel.

It caused endless comment, and the publication of the incident attracted widespread attention.

The discovery was made of a seal hanging by a thread string to the jewel, and by that it was traced to Mrs. Lecour (then dead) and thence to Victor Lecour. It was further found that Victor Lecour's ancestors had fled from France at the beginning of the present Century. Then, in addition to these facts, the information came that a similar jewel had been stolen from the crown of France during the great French Revolution of 1789. The description of the two diamonds went far to prove that they were one and the same.

But it was all speculation, and the diamond remained, and still remains, a mystery.

As may be imagined, the New Orleans papers were full of the subject, and every effort was made to solve a mystery which had created so much discussion. Generally the gem was thought to be the

stolen French jewel. But there was no positive evidence to prove it such. Of course, it is connected with an interesting incident herein related, but as for the jewel itself, it has ever been what it was then—a mystery.

This fragment of a romance is one of the experiences of war. It does not undertake to tell the story in all the completeness that is usual to fiction writers unfettered by facts. It is simply a record of an unpleasant journey through a dismal region. The affection of Nixon and Mrs. Lecour was an interesting episode of our expedition, and it is chronicled here as it occurred, with no attempt to stretch the facts and make an incident end in happiness, when in reality, it ended in so much sorrow.

It is not the writer's fault, gentle reader, that this story does not end happily. War is tragic; some of its incidents are fragmentary, and its events do not move as smoothly as you might desire. So you must accept this as an episode of an unique expedition, and fill in any discrepancies at your own pleasure.

Perhaps it was you who lost that diamond. If so, you should prove the property and get the jewel,

for fine diamonds in this world are almost as rare as fine stories, and I'm afraid that their value is vastly more appreciated.

THE END.

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